

Analysis of Alumni Survey 2007

METHODOLOGY

The Alumni Survey is conducted every three years. The logistical problem of keeping current contact information and a low return rate make it unreasonable to conduct the survey more often. The surveys are distributed by mail and personal contact. The Alumni Survey is very similar to the Senior Survey; however, in 2007, the CM Program revised the objectives to more closely match the content topics required by the ACCE. Therefore, the two surveys cannot be compared line by line, but many of the objectives did not change or are very similar to the older ones. In future, the surveys will have the same objectives.

The Alumni Survey consists of two parts. The first part asked the alumni how well the Construction Management Program prepared them to achieve the CM Program objectives. Alumni circled a response on a four-point, Likert scale for each objective. The responses were: STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, DISAGREE, and STRONGLY DISAGREE. The Program objectives were listed as follows:

The Construction Management Program prepared you to:

1. Communicate effectively.
2. Be aware of important ethical considerations in the construction industry.
3. Know basic scientific theory and analytic procedures.
4. Have mathematical skills.
5. Be familiar with basic business and management concepts.
6. Be familiar with design theory.
7. Be familiar with the analysis and design of building systems.
8. Be familiar with construction materials and methods.
9. Be familiar with construction graphics.
10. Have basic surveying skills.
11. Be familiar with estimating procedures.
12. Be familiar with planning and scheduling.
13. Be familiar with construction accounting and finance.
14. Know some of the basics of construction law.
15. Be familiar with basic safety requirements.
16. Be familiar with basic procedures of project management.

Average scores were calculated by assigning a score of 4 for STRONGLY AGREE, 3 for AGREE, 2 for DISAGREE, and 1 for STRONGLY DISAGREE for each objective. Objectives with an average score of less than 3.0 were identified as possibly needing some improvement.

The second part of the survey consists of two open-ended questions and a space for comments. The questions are as follows:

1. What additional learning would have better prepared you to solve practical problems in your position?
2. What additional skills, knowledge, or values would help you advance more rapidly in your current position?
3. Comments?

Averages for the Likert scale were arranged in a table format for faculty review. Qualitative comments were aggregated anonymously and sorted by topics mentioned most frequently. All data were reviewed and discussed by the construction faculty who agreed to the findings listed below.

LIMITATIONS

The CM Program objectives listed in the survey were revised and approved in 2007. The survey returns were self-selecting because not every graduate participated. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to the entire population of graduates. However, the surveys should be valuable nonetheless.

FINDINGS

Nineteen alumni responded.

Rated Objectives

Alumni rated the objectives slightly lower than seniors. This may be because actual job experience creates a higher standard.

Objectives with an average score lower than 3.00 are listed below:

- ...be familiar with design theory. (2.95)
- ...be familiar with construction graphics. (2.95)
- ...be familiar with estimating procedures. (2.89)
- ...be familiar with planning and scheduling. (2.89)
- ...be familiar with construction accounting and finance. (2.37)
- ...know some of the basics of construction law. (2.95)

The highest rated objective was “...be familiar with the basic procedures of project management.” (3.32)

The lowest rated objective was “...be familiar with construction accounting and finance.” (2.37) This objective has been consistently rated low in previous alumni surveys as well as the Senior Survey. This indicates that some effort should be made to improve this learning objective.

The other objectives rated below 3.00 did not miss this milestone by much. This indicates that some improvement is needed, but it does not indicate a dramatic discontent among the alumni.

What additional learning would have better prepared you to solve practical problems in your position?

- Visit actual construction sites and talk to people in the field.
- More estimating classes; one should focus on residential, and one should focus on commercial.
- More management based courses.

What additional skills, knowledge, or values would help you advance more rapidly in your current position?

- Stronger communication skills and public speaking skills.
- More hands-on experiences.
- More instruction in budgeting and management.

Comments

- Create more opportunities for the students to tour and review real world drawings and construction on a large-scale project.
- Offer more networking opportunities.