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Student Teams Continue Success in Northeast Construction Management Student Competition

Exhaustive two-day challenge to plan and pitch real projects puts RWU construction management students to the test – and above the competition in northeast



November 20, 2012 | Jill Rodrigues '05

BRISTOL, R.I. – In a recent competition among the Northeast's top college and university construction management programs, three teams of Roger Williams University students swept the awards categories in the Associated Schools of Construction Region 1 Construction Management Student Competition.

The two-day competition was no cakewalk for the teams competing in the commercial building, design build, and heavy highway categories. Competitors were presented with a real world project previously built by the competition judges – professionals from major national construction and architect-engineering firms with intimate knowledge of these projects – who had developed a problem that the teams must solve.

On day one, the teams had just 16 hours to complete an entire project proposal. For the second day, the teams were required to deliver an oral presentation to the judges, who acted as the prospective owners. Finally, the teams acted as firms bidding or negotiating for the project.

According to Roger Williams construction management faculty members, RWU teams were well prepared. Teams began to take shape in the spring 2012 semester, and preparation and practice was completed in students' personal time under faculty supervision (no course credit is rewarded). Under the guidance of faculty advisors Frederick Gould, Anthony Branca, Gokhan Celik and Michael Emmer, students dedicated months to practicing mock scenarios in skills-building workshops led by local industry professionals and RWU alumni who donated their time to help the students. The Rhode Island Associated General Contractors and the Construction Industries of Rhode Island donated funds to help cover the cost of travel to the competition.

"This competition is incredibly difficult. It takes a tremendous commitment on the part of the student," says Professor of Engineering Frederick Gould, one of the faculty members who accompanied the RWU teams to the competition in Morristown, N.J. "To be successful they have to be firmly committed to being a strong professional contributor."

According to Gould, the students had worked so hard on their oral presentation skills that they pitched their "project proposals" without notes and spoke with great confidence.

"You stood there in awe at how good they were," he says.

This is not the first time RWU teams have dominated the regional competition – students in 2008 were the first to earn the honor for Roger Williams. However, this year's competition came with more competitors – a record 29 teams entered the competition – from such schools as Wentworth Institute of Technology, Polytechnic Institute of New York, Pennsylvania College of Technology and Pratt Institute.

How does Gould feel about his students' performance?

"Phenomenal. You have to be well prepared, but you also have to be lucky," he says. "One tiny little slip-up and you lose. You have to be absolutely perfect to win."

Gould noted that the real indicator of how well the students performed – besides taking home all three awards – is that after the competition, representatives from two of the construction firms that acted as judges for the RWU teams approached the students with job offers:

"They just wanted to hire them on the spot. They were good ambassadors for us, our students."

In February, members of the RWU teams will advance to the ASC National Open Problem Competition in Reno, competing in the preconstruction and integrated project delivery categories against such schools as Texas A&M, Virginia Tech, California Polytechnic State University and the University of Southern California.

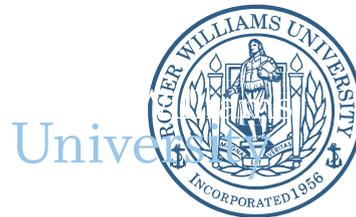
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