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Building a Path to Education and Employment

As RWU's first LAB graduate awaits his degree on May 18, construction management major Elsch Maisoh reflects on the major building projects he has managed and professional awards he has earned working with Gilbane Building Company



May 13, 2013 | Jill Rodrigues '05

Providence, R.I. — As an assistant superintendent at [Gilbane Building Company](#), one of the nation's largest building contractors, Elsch Maisoh is no stranger to managing big projects.

He's tackled assignments like a \$250 million Fidelity Investments project and the T.F. Green Airport InterLink, at times the sole Gilbane representative on site. Two projects he worked on even earned Gilbane's New England Builder of the Year award.

For a [construction management major](#) who won't officially possess a college degree until Commencement 2013 at Roger Williams University, those are no small accomplishments.

This May, Maisoh will become the first graduate of the Learn-Apply-Build Scholarship Program, a one-of-a-kind work/study partnership launched in 2007 by Roger Williams, Gilbane, the Community College of Rhode Island and the MET Center in Providence.

The LAB Program targets high school students in the Providence area (now from the TIMES² Academy), introduces them to construction management and provides a pathway to a college degree (via an associate degree from CCRI and bachelor's work at RWU), hands-on internships and part-time jobs to gain field experience and eventually to full-time employment (both at Gilbane) upon graduation.

A motivated student at the MET School with an unfocused passion for entrepreneurship, Maisoh says college was in his sights – he was accepted by four and wait-listed at others – but he wasn't sure what he wanted to study. When he discovered the LAB Program, he jumped at the chance to “take a risk” and dip his toes into construction management.

The fact that he would ease his way into his studies at CCRI while guaranteed part-time employment and help covering tuition costs sweetened the deal for him. Maisoh says he wouldn't have been as successful in college had he enrolled in a four-year program directly out of high school.

“My time in community college helped me mature, put things in perspective and put a game plan together,” he says. “I established a work ethic and a professionalism. I know what I'm walking into now – what the industry requires of me.”

The idea for the program came about from the desire to diversify participation in construction management, an area that many – including Maisoh – don't know is offered as an educational track and potential career.

“We thought we could inspire high school freshmen and sophomores to take the hard courses and help them develop the skills to be successful in college and then lead them into a job,” says RWU Dean of Engineering Robert A. Potter Jr.

With Maisoh, it couldn't have turned out better. One of the first students to enter the program, he'll finish in less time than expected – and far exceeding expectations.

At Roger Williams, he's one of the top construction management students and president of the Sigma Lambda Chi honor society. He's part of the team that earned the top spot in a regional student competition and then competed nationally, and he organized students to mentor urban high school students for the **ACE Mentor Program of Rhode Island**.

And based on Maisoh's track record at Gilbane, John Sinnott, the company's vice president and Rhode Island district manager, is sure he will be a future leader of the company.

“Elsch is a role model who has certainly made the Rhode Island district proud,” Sinnott says. “He has risen far and above any challenge we've given him. If the rest of the LAB students are even half as good as Elsch, we'll have a very successful program.”

Potter says that Maisoh's unrivaled work ethic – many days exceed 12 hours between work and study – is the lead factor: “Elsch has earned his way every step of the way.”

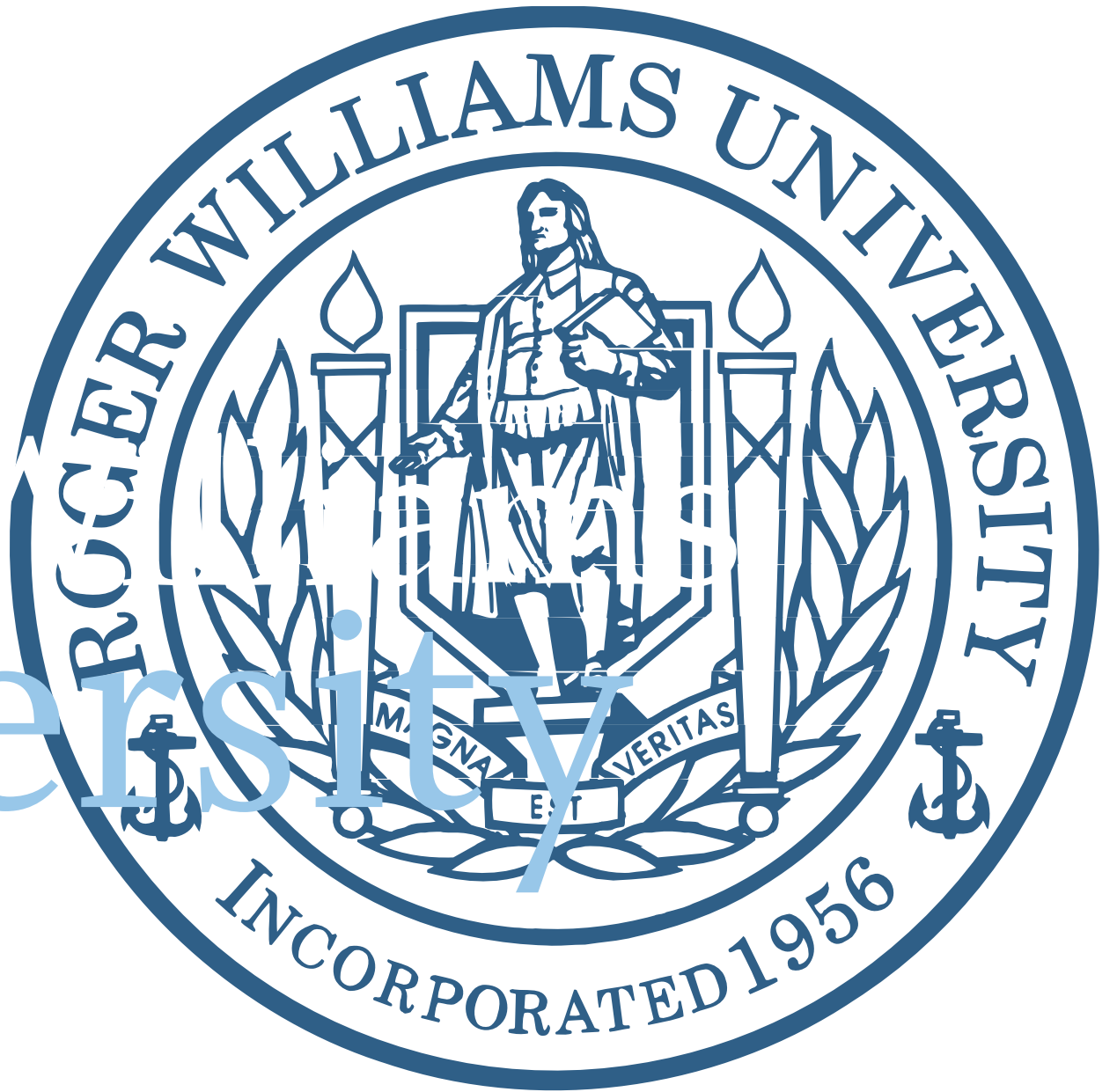
After Commencement, Maisoh starts full-time at Gilbane as a superintendent. He feels like he's ahead of the curve.

“I have five and a half years of construction experience. It's something I developed my passion in, so I know it's what I want to do. Instead of investing hundreds of thousands of dollars in a major without experience, I got a chance to experience it first and then go to school for it.”

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