40 Years of CPEM Leadership with Dr. John Borcherding

The CPEM Graduate Program is one of the world’s largest and most recognized in our industry. It currently has about 50 graduate students with about one-fourth at the PhD level. It has twelve faculty, including six adjuncts. We now have above 700 graduates, including more than 600 master’s and 150 PhD’s. In addition to numerous graduates located in North America, UT is represented well in Europe, the Middle East, Central and South America, and the Far East. Over 60 are teaching at universities. Indeed, UT graduates are so prevalent in South Korea, they are fondly known as “The Texas Mafia”.

The CPEM Program’s growth and reputation did not come accidentally. It has resulted from about 50 years of deliberate actions and planning. Dr. John Borcherding has been a vital part of the program since 1972 and continues to play an active role in the teaching, research, graduate student guidance and interface with industry.

The program was initiated in 1965 by the late Professor Werner Dornberger, who chaired the Architectural Engineering Department. He initiated a “construction management” program in Architectural Engineering in 1965 and hired Professor Bob Carr to lead it in 1967. The program was at the undergraduate level only, and consisted of only a couple of courses.

Dr. John Borcherding was hired in 1972 at a time that the ARE and CE departments were combined along with a move into Ernest Cockrell, Jr. Hall a few years later. That began the evolution of the construction management graduate program, which was later renamed Construction Engineering and Project Management.

Dr. Calin Popescu joined the faculty in 1974, after defecting from Romania where he was head of that nation’s computer center and was Project Manager of a 12,000 room hotel complex on the Black Sea. Early master’s graduates were Dewayne Hahn, Marvin Kissinger, Wayne Lott, Bill McGuire and Lay R Su. Masad Zakkak was granted the first PhD in 1976.

Richard Tucker joined the faculty in 1976 after two years as vice-president of a Dallas construction firm. He previously had served on the faculty at UT Arlington, the most recent several years as Associate Dean of Engineering, where he had instituted several graduate programs and established a Construction Research Center. He had also served on the national AGC Research Advisory Council. Both he and John Borcherding were actively involved in ASCE at the local, state and national levels and, in the late 1970’s, with the Business Roundtable’s Construction Industry Cost Effectiveness Project. UT was selected by the Business Roundtable to conduct research as part of the CICE project.

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Construction Management Association of America (CMAA) Longhorn Student Chapter

CMAA Longhorn Student Chapter is a graduate and undergraduate student organization focused on Construction Management. The goal is to educate students interested in construction engineering and construction management in ways to be successful. CMAA has several events throughout the year, including hosting industry speakers at meetings, construction workshops and construction site visits that expose students to the construction world. These events give students great hands-on experience in the construction field. Undergraduates are strongly encouraged to attend to learn more about Construction and Project Management in a fun and relaxed setting. In addition, the CMAA officers will educate its members in ways to successful in their job searches in the construction industry.

Support CEPM

Support the CEPM program by donating to:

a) the Richard & Shirley Tucker Endowed Excellence Fund,
b) CEPM (program funds), or
c) start your own endowment!

Learn how to donate by contacting Dr. Bill O’Brien at (512) 471-4638 or emailing him at: wjob@mail.utexas.edu

“Tucker Excellence Funds have allowed us to recruit some of the best graduate students through supplemental support awards” - Jim O’Connor, Ph.D.

Graduate Student Organization Update

For the Fall 2012 semester, the Graduate Student Organization (GSO) at CEPM organized academic and social events for students to interact with members from the construction industry and academia.

GSO was proud to host several prominent personalities from the construction industry for the Fall 2012 lecture series. To start the series, Mr. Kerby Kunz and his team from Hensel Phelps gave a very informative lecture and presentation on the latest technologies being implemented by them in Building Information Modeling and its utilization in real world projects. Davis Stutzman from Conspectus Inc. presented the lecture, “Specifications as integration of collaboration,” which explained the importance of specifications in the construction industry. Later in the semester, Dr. John McLeod from the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) gave a very insightful lecture on the "Owner’s perspective on Projects Controls".

GSO also held their traditional Fall semester BBQ at the Simkins Lawn where current CEPM students and faculty gathered to welcome the new incoming students.

Some of the events that the new officers will organize for the Spring 2013 semester include the CEPM annual golf tournament, a farewell BBQ for graduating students, and additional lectures from guest speakers. In March 2013, GSO organized an activity booth for K-5 children at Explore UT, the University’s annual open house.

Class of 2012 Updates

Luis Aldana (M.S.) works for Sigma Inmobiliaria as a Project Controls Engineer in Guatemala | Anup Sasturkar (M.S.) works as Field Engineer at Obayashi Corp in Austin, TX | Shanna McCoy (M.S.) | Puneet Anil Nathu (M.S.) | Luis Garcia (M.S.) | Tyler Stock (M.S.)

GSO Officers

President - Prasad Dali
Vice President - Pablo Roldos
Treasurer- Nour Bouhou
Director of Social Events - Oscar Fierro

Please send alumni updates to: Fernanda.Leite@austin.utexas.edu

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Although the CEPM Program was affiliated primarily with Architectural Engineering, it was recognized that there are four distinct construction industry sectors: residential, commercial, industrial, and heavy civil. Of those, the industrial sector was chosen for program emphasis in research with the thought that learning and results could be transferred to the other sectors.

Thus, the faculty began efforts to develop funding to support a research and graduate student initiative for the CEPM Program development. Some private owner companies, including Procter & Gamble, Monsanto, DuPont, Suncor, Shell and Texaco were willing to hire UT faculty as consultants on large industrial projects, around North America and in other countries. These activities occurred at about the same time as UT’s Business Roundtable involvement and cultivated in establishing an annual Construction Productivity Improvement Conference at UT, which is continuing.

The successful consulting on a large scale project in Wales led to an offer by Texaco’s Chief Engineer to engage the faculty as consultants for a large project planned in Louisiana. He accepted UT’s counter proposal to run the efforts through The University as a CEPM research effort that continued for five years and involved several graduate students in addition to Professors Tucker, Borcherding and Popescu. (Current CEPM Professor Jim O’Connor did his dissertation research as part of that effort.) The research effort was successful; Texaco estimated that it saved 14 months and $400 million from the project’s estimate.

The establishment of the Construction Industry Institute resulted from the consulting and research efforts for industry. At a Construction Productivity Improvement Conference in 1982, a Texaco executive invited other companies to join with Texaco to pool resources to establish a national construction research center headquartered at UT Austin. Although details took time to emerge, the CII was established in October 1983 and is now approaching its 30th anniversary. It is estimated that over 1000 industrial personnel have been involved, along with 60 universities and 500 graduate students. Obviously, a share of faculty and students are located at UT Austin, and CII staff provide adjunct faculty in the CEPM Program.

John Borcherding has been involved throughout the evolution of the CEPM Program. He joined the faculty as an Assistant Professor in 1972. In 1978, he won the prestigious ASCE Walter L. Huber Civil Engineering Research Prize, which recognizes young ASCE members who have demonstrated notable achievements in research related to Civil Engineering. Dr. Borcherding rose through the ranks to full professor prior to transitioning to adjunct professor in the mid 1990’s. He has maintained an office in ECJ and continues to have the same student and research interface as he had as a tenured faculty member. He has been involved in the establishment of numerous new courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels and has a personal relationship with both faculty and students. John Borcherding has been the continuing presence in the CEPM Program’s evolution.

Dr. Borcherding was married to Connie Hardi in 1975. She has been a Children’s Minister at Riverbend Church for approximately 20 years. Their oldest child Jackie Borcherding is an Assistant District Attorney in Williamson County. Chad Borcherding is currently in the Tulane Professional MBA Program in Houston.