

**ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT**

by

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The Graduate School of the University of Washington charged our review committee with the mandated ten-year evaluation of the graduate and undergraduate programs of the Department of Construction Management (CM). The Graduate School organized the review process using Catalyst to supply documents for the review and they scheduled all meetings. The Chair of the Department of Construction Management, Prof. William (Bill) Bender, supplied the 2017 self-study document. The previous self-study document from 2007 was available to the Committee through Catalyst. These documents discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the CM Department. In addition to the documents, the Committee met with students, faculty, staff and the Advisory Board during the two-day period of October 26-27, 2017.

Many administrative changes have occurred over the past ten years: The University changed the name of the College of Architecture to the College of Built Environments (CBE) in 2009. Architecture is now a department within the CBE. The Department of Construction Management also resides in the CBE and the 2007 Department Chair for CM is now the Dean of CBE.

Based upon the charge to the Committee, we addressed the four main questions posed to us as discussed in the following sections:

1. Are they doing what they should be doing?
2. Are they doing it well?
3. How can they make things better?
4. How should the University assist them?

In general, the committee was unanimously and enthusiastically impressed with high quality of the undergraduate (UG) program. Although many of the graduate programs were highly rated by the students, faculty and the Advisory Board, there was not a uniform consensus, particularly among the faculty, of which degree programs were most beneficial to the academic environment. As outside reviewers, we were somewhat puzzled by the differences and similarities of the many certificate and graduate degree programs offered by CM.

Overall Recommendations of Review Committee:

The reputation of the department is deservedly strong. This would be further strengthened if a strategic plan were developed that addressed the challenge of balancing the educational and research missions. We framed our assessment using the matrix shown below.

| Question/Area of Emphasis | Are they doing what they should be doing? | Are they doing it well? | How can they make things better? | How should the University assist them? |
|------------------------------|---|-------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Communication and Leadership | | | | |
| BS degree | | | | |
| MS degree | | | | |
| Ph.D. degree | | | | |
| Research | | | | |
| Facilities | | | | |
| Staff | | | | |
| Advisory Board | | | | |
| Visibility | | | | |
| Finances | | | | |

Using the matrix, we provide specific answers for each question in the following sections.

1. Are they doing what they should be doing?

Communication and leadership:

- Bill Bender is a very good chair, who is running an excellent UG program with limited resources.
- The part-time administrator Katharine McDermott does a good job.

BS degree:

- Very enthusiastic yes.
- The students we met were diverse with respect to gender, age and race.

MS degrees:

- The “STEM” designation for the graduate degrees has been very helpful in recruiting international students.
- Several degree programs are offered in different formats with different emphases.

Ph.D. degree:

- There was not a consensus about the size and scope of the Ph.D. program or its relationship to research in the Department.
- Some faculty feel that access to Ph.D. students is restricted by the College through its detailed administrative processes.
- The CM field is very young relative to engineering and business, and Ph.D. programs are in the developing stages in the US. Building a program can be challenging.

Research:

- The majority of the faculty are research active and publish regularly.
- The research topics are varied.

Facilities:

- Meeting spaces for undergraduate students in Architecture Hall are readily available.
- The Magnuson facility is also available to students.

Staff:

- The Department has several part-time staff devoted to various aspects of departmental administration.
- The staff are enthusiastic and hard working.

Advisory Board:

- The Board is very engaged with the undergraduate program.
- It is willing to engage on MS and research.
- The BS + MBA is preferred to a dual CM degree (BS & MS).

Visibility:

- Many of the undergraduate students transferred to CM from other majors after joining the University.
- CM-organized job fairs and internships were useful in attracting students to the Department.

Finances:

- Without undertaking a full- scale audit, the Committee believes that the Chair is handling the finances in a responsible manner, with budget shortfalls due to dropping enrollments being a real possibility in the future.
- Public universities have legal constraints that allow for little if no leeway provided to the Chair in the use of “hard” funds.
- The Committee was not able to determine the “soft” money resources to the Department that might be used to offset the possible shortfalls.

2. Are they doing it well?

Communication and leadership:

- Faculty do not always understand the administrative barriers that staff face in carrying out routine tasks such as assigning classrooms, setting up the time schedule for classes, etc.
- Comments included “everyone works hard”.
- There seemed to be a can-do entrepreneurial spirit.
- The relationship between the educational and research goals of the Department was not clear.

BS degree:

- The students and employers are very satisfied.
- Student comments included: “We are honored to be here”. “We feel like we have a future”.
- The undergraduate degree program is vibrant and healthy.
- There is high student demand.
- Student internships are very beneficial.
- Affiliate faculty are knowledgeable.

MS degrees:

- The students seemed happy with the degree experiences thus far.

- It is not clear if the purpose and curriculum of some MS programs align with faculty and program goals.

PhD:

- Faculty are working hard individually to recruit students but are not as successful as they would like. This may be partly due to the infancy of the CM Ph.D. program in the US.
- Faculty are working to bring international students to campus through visiting positions.

Research:

- Many faculty have research grants.
- Some faculty are more successful in obtaining research funds than others.
- Faculty productivity metrics are in line with similar departments in the US.

Facilities:

- The on-campus office space and student meeting rooms seemed appropriate.
- The Magnuson facility is wonderful.

Staff:

- The staff are very dedicated and exceptionally capable.

Advisory Board:

- The group is very dedicated to the Department and supporting the undergraduate mission.

Visibility:

- Although the undergraduate degree is a “found” program on campus, the student demand is high.
- The students are academically strong and very motivated.
- Publicity materials such as posters in the Architecture Hall that Bender ordered are very creative.

Finances:

- The department gives the impression that it remains afloat in part due to its various degree programs as well as being extremely frugal.
- There is a sense among the faculty that finances are OK, but not much available to support faculty development.

3. How can they make things better?

Communication and leadership:

- CM should develop a “living” strategic plan to which all commit. The document should not be written and filed away, but implemented and updated continuously.
- CM should address an undercurrent of dissatisfaction regarding the workloads associated with different allocations of research, teaching and service tasks.

BS degree:

- FIGs may be a good link to the University overall.

- Continue to revise curriculum for student educational needs such as creating a second year technology course to prepare students for internships.
- Obtain feedback from students through exit and alumni surveys to improve the curriculum and facilities.

MS degree:

- The Department should re-evaluate the MS graduate degrees, especially in terms of developing a vision that addresses the needs of the market and the needs of the faculty. The 2007 Review Committee Report noted similar issues with the graduate program.
- The student population is changing. Does the existing program make sense for the international students?
- The Department appears to be doing too many things with limited faculty resources. Is this the best use of their valuable time?
- Obtain feedback from students through exit and alumni surveys to improve the curriculum and facilities.

Ph.D. degree:

- Revise the admission process.
- The University should support the CM Department in having more control of their Ph.D. degree program, including admissions.

Research:

- The CM strategic plan should set goals for the research program.
- Although multiple faculty have vibrant research programs, it is unclear if there is a consistent research mission in the Department overall.
- The relationship between the research and graduate programs should be strengthened.
- The Department should provide faculty workloads consistent with the research mission.

Facilities:

- We appreciate the challenge, but we think it is worth the effort to figure out how the offsite facilities can be better utilized. The offsite facilities are an under-developed potential.
- Facilities for graduate students to meet should be established.
- Can the Department make use of the UW facilities in Rome and other venues?

Staff:

- Additional staff for graduate advising (to supplement faculty advisors) will be needed as enrollments grow.
- Grant writing requires special staff, which are not presently available.
- There appears to be an imbalance in the staffing in the College overall.

Advisory Board:

- The advisory board is very enthusiastic about the UG degree program, and would be willing to assist the department in re-evaluating the MS programs.

- The board expects the Department would have a research program as part of its mission in an R-1 University system.
- Assign board members as mentors to graduate students.

Visibility:

- At the University level, the visibility of the Department could be enhanced.
- The interaction with other departments in the College could be strengthened, allowing for more collaboration projects and interdisciplinary research.

Finances:

- The Department is operating on a very thin line, particularly after the University did not provide funding for mandated faculty raises.
- Communication with the College in this area could be improved.
- Are faculty development funds adequate? It is unclear from the budget provided in the Self-Study document.

4. How should the University assist them?

Communication and leadership:

- The University should support one or more facilitated workshops for the CM faculty and staff to develop a strategic plan.
- The University should put the CM Department Chair in touch with other departments on the Seattle campus who are working on similar issues and concerns such as
 - Changing student populations in graduate degree programs;
 - Innovative ways to bridge research and teaching; and
 - Relationships between affiliate and tenure-track faculty.
- The University should consult with the CM Chair on the new CBE hire.

BS degree:

- FIGs may be a good link to the University overall.
- Allow CM Department signage on University construction sites in the Puget Sound area, especially on campus.

MS Degrees:

- The University should support the Department in sorting through the various degree possibilities by providing funding for surveys and market research.
- The University should provide better international outreach for the Department in terms of growing its MS degree programs.

Ph.D. degree:

- The University should support the CM Department in having more control of their Ph.D. degree program, including admissions.
- The University should provide more access to fellowships and assistantship funds for the CM programs under the STEM umbrella.

- The University should provide travel funding for Ph.D. recruiting.

Finances:

- The University or College should provide funds (state) for raises and promotions for faculty and staff rather than forcing the Department to use its very limited resources, especially when the University is mandating the raises.
- The CM department should receive more support staff positions for administrative activities.
- The University should provide more staff support systems for faculty and students for research and graduate programs.

Overall, the College, and ultimately the University, is only as good as its constituent departments. It is in the University's best interests to support the departments. We thank the University administration for the opportunity to review the Department of Construction Management. The Department of Construction Management is successful and vibrant, with excellent potential for growth and increased academic stature. Based upon our findings, we believe that the ten-year review cycle is appropriate, and that interim reviews are not necessary. We encourage the University to continue and expand its support for CM, as it strives for excellence.