

University center aids industry

Executives share experience, solutions

By ATLANTIS TILLMAN
Editor of THE BATTALION

The Center for Construction Education, in its partnership with the industry, offers more than a typical classroom education to executives with their Construction Executive Program (CEP).



Smith

The Center, a branch of the Department of Civil Engineering, began the CEP program for professional development seven years ago. Sixty construction companies, such as Bechtel, TU Electric and Fluor Daniel, Inc., work along with a faculty advisory committee to develop and approve the curriculum, said John Smith, assistant director for marketing and implementation.

The program has three goals:

- to provide participants with executive-level techniques for management of construction-related activities,
- to provide a forum for participants and instructors to share experiences, and

- to build a network of contacts within the industry to improve communications between companies and individuals.

Dennis Braasch, vice president of Project Controls at Fluor Daniel, Inc., attended CEP in January 1991 and said he has referred to his CEP manuals on the job for everyday business.

"The financial reviews and strategic planning contain formats and thought processes that I use every day," Braasch said. Companies like Fluor Daniel send their employees to the program every year.

"Two-thirds to three-quarters of our business is repeat business," Smith said.

The 400 participants of CEP are usually senior engineers or executives that are here for the training for the step into their next position, Smith said.

Strategic planning, human behavior, project management, contract administration, and a new case study offer approaches to the daily activities of the construction executive.

Participants learn other companies' cultures and how they deal with similar problems, Smith said. They drop the corporate barriers and solve problems together.

"Most folks will never again get this close to their peers in their careers," Smith said. "They

will never get this chance to rebound."

CEP also serves as a bridge between competing companies. Representatives work together in solving problems common to each other in order to weather the harshly realistic case study in the last week of the program. Braasch said the corporate

identity, even between competitors, has to be dropped while participating in the course.

"You always want to represent your company well," Braasch said, "but here we establish our credibility as a group, not letting our companies be the focal point."

CEP adds reality to course

By ATLANTIS TILLMAN

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Graduates of The Construction Executive Program (CEP), sponsored by The Center for Construction Education, returned to College Station to test a joint-venture case study to be added to the curriculum in January.

The fourth and final week of the program will be devoted to a case study to test topics discussed in the first three weeks. Four modules focus on the setup, planning, opportunities and solutions involved in a joint venture, said John Smith, assistant director for marketing and implementation.

"The case-study method is probably the most successful method of teaching," Smith said. "They take these real life situations and go back to their companies with what they've participated in and learned here."

Former participants from 20 companies volunteered to help in the preparation and to give their comments.

John Dittmar, a construction supervisor for TU Electric in Dallas, said the strength of the program was its realism.

"New problems with the venture kept coming in, real problems that could easily happen in this industry," Dittmar said.

"People go away thinking about it."

Researchers use tank to evaluate oil rig safety

By ANGIE PAYNE

Special to THE BATTALION

With a compass rose on its floor, a five-ton capacity overhead traveling crane, and robotic-looking machinery everywhere, the three-story room looks like a science-fiction movie set.

But it's really a giant wave tank. Inside the 150-foot by 100-foot wave tank, the Offshore Technology Research Center (OTRC) creates wave conditions that test the safety of oil drilling rigs in the Gulf of Mexico.

"Our biggest concern is the safety of the deep water drilling rigs," Peter Johnson,

facility manager and engineer for the OTRC said.

Before safety experiments can begin, he said, scale models of drilling rigs are constructed and lowered into the tank by the crane.

Technicians use the crane to align the model on the compass rose so they can observe and record the effects of different wave angles on the structure.

Inside the wave tank, 48 computer-controlled, 10-foot-tall hinged waveboards move in different sequences and motions to reproduce the waves of the Gulf of Mexico.

Technicians monitor and record things like waves' run-up and load on the structure's columns and motions like sway, heave, pitch and roll.

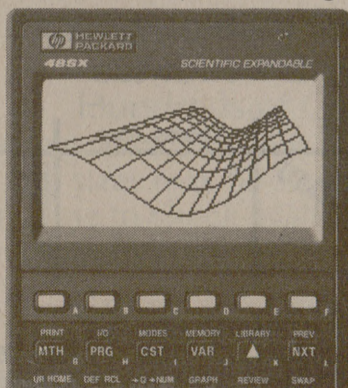
"Our mission," Johnson said, "is to conduct research of engineering in deep water. We want to be solving tomorrow's problems" of the safety of deep ocean drilling rigs.

Solving these problems, the OTRC believes, begins when new ways to determine forces on floating structures and new techniques and materials to secure them at sea are developed.



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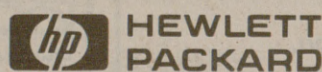


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