Colorado State University students get access to the same professional scheduling tool that top contractors use every day, ensuring they’ll be ready for the workforce

About: Colorado State University is building a tradition of excellence. The Construction Management (CM) program at CSU is one of the top-ranked in the nation. Since its inception in 1946, more than 5,000 students have graduated, many of them going on to become leaders in their field. The program is accredited by the American Council for Construction Education.

Outside of the classroom, 11 student organizations and competition teams compete regionally and nationally with other universities and offer students the opportunity to apply skills to real-world construction management scenarios.

Construction management students at Colorado State University (CSU) are preparing for a future in a competitive and ever-changing industry.

Assistant professor Mary Nobe explains that today’s construction “training is ultimately about preparing students for a workforce that increasingly demands management track employees understand not just construction but also technology and its role in making informed decisions.”

Nobe co-teaches a Construction Project Scheduling and Cost Control class (CON 461) that uses the same Powerproject software used by more than 100,000 schedulers. The software evolved with the construction industry over the last 30 years to become the most intuitive tool for building CPM schedules, updating them, and making sound managerial decisions based on real-time progress data.

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CSU students learn about lag, lead, float, critical path methodology and how to build a CPM schedule in Powerproject. They also learn how that schedule can help reduce risk.

“We show students how to use the schedule for documentation,” says Nobe. “It’s not just so they can show how it went wrong but also how they were able to fix it. It facilitates honest discussion around project progress.”

CSU’s Construction Management department head Mostafa Khattab explained that the switch to Powerproject was based on the feedback received from faculty members and the department industry advisory board.

“There is no question that technology is impacting construction practices. One of our responsibilities in higher education is increase the student’s awareness of such technology,” he said.

Board members come from leadership positions in the region’s top construction firms and help to ensure that the CSU curriculum best prepares its graduates for the workforce. Many of the board members’ firms had already made the move to Powerproject and found it a better fit for the way they work.

“Having a partnership with Powerproject has been good for our program and for our students who get access to the professional tool at no cost,” said Khattab.

Elecosoft, maker of Powerproject, provides free academic licenses to CSU so all construction students can install the fully functional version of the scheduling software on their own laptops or desktop computers. The academic licensing program for Powerproject is an important part of the company’s commitment to the industry, says Jim Dawkins, US Channel Manager for Elecosoft.

“We’ve already seen the incredible impact that the professionalization of project scheduling has made on the industry,” says Dawkins. “And, we want to do our part to help ensure that the next generation is prepared for whatever tomorrow’s projects demand.”

Lessons from the Classroom and Beyond

CSU, like many other accredited universities, has adopted a curriculum that gives students the book smarts and the practical experience needed to succeed.

The school bolsters class work with opportunities for practical experience at mock project competitions versus teams from other universities. CSU teams regularly takes home top prizes at regional Associated Schools of Construction (ASC) events.

That well-rounded foundation is one of the reasons CSU boasts a nearly 100% placement rate for its students after college.

One soon-to-be graduate is Ty E. The epitome of the dedicated student, Ty takes full advantage of every opportunity to learn. Going into his final semester before graduating, he’d already used Powerproject at most of the seven student competitions he had attended and would use it again at the two more events he planned to participate in during his final semester (a time many students would be tempted to coast).

“I love the real-world experience of the competitions,” said Ty. “It wraps up all the years of college into a couple of weeks.”

Ty, who hopes to land a job as an assistant construction superintendent says he would use Powerproject to do three-week look-aheads.

“The experience, both the competitions and with Powerproject, has really given me a leg up. I’ll be able to go into a construction job and look at a CPM project schedule and know what I’m looking at, what has to happen and when.”

That’s powerful knowledge that will serve Ty – and his future employer – well as he starts his career.

More information

Free academic licensing is available for all accredited colleges and universities in the U.S. Visit www.elecosoft.com/powerproject-education-licences or contact a regional Powerproject reseller to find out more.