

George Brown College: 35-year reputation for construction training excellence

Toronto's George Brown College has built a 40-year reputation for training young people in construction management, architectural, engineering and related trades skills. Graduates are ready to get to work at a range of levels, including the college's new four year degree program in construction management.

"Employers find our graduates come out with a really good hands-on feel for things in the industry; they are very well versed on the job site and in the office," says Kelly Hodgson.

Manager, Industry Liaison Office, of the College's Centre for Construction and Engineering Technologies. "Our faculty are really involved in the industry - in fact many of our instructors are part-time here and full time in the industry - bringing practical experience to students unavailable elsewhere."

The college admits about 1,300 new students each September. Full-time enrollment in the various construction-related programs is 4,000 to 5,000.

Hodgson says the college has recently expanded and adapted its programs to enhance resources and training in green practices and solid environmental principles. "We're also re-discovering an increased emphasis on restoration and renovation."

"Employers are blown away by how our graduates are so focused and that they know what they want to do in the con-

struction industry. They are amazed by their passion and interest."

Meanwhile, interest is growing in the College's new Bachelor of Applied Technology - Construction Science and Management degree program, "the province's only four-year degree program in construction science and management."

"In Ontario's increasingly specialized and complex construction industry, project management now requires a solid education in building sciences as well as practical business and managerial training, including strong negotiating, organizational and interpersonal skills," the college says. "This new degree programs provides the in-depth theoretical preparation, project-based team learning and mandatory co-op work experience reessential to meeting these requirements."

Hodgson says companies which regularly hire students for co-op programs and new graduates include: Monarch, Aecon, EllisDon, Kenaidan, PCL, Eastern, Bird, Graham Brothers and Mattamy Homes.

"Employers know our graduates are ready and truly interested in a construction-related career and have the skills they need to become productive right from the start of their careers," she said.

Further information about George Brown College construction industry programs is available at <http://www.georgebrown.ca/centres/CET/index.aspx>

Michael Swartz: A young construction lawyer "Clarity is crucial" in avoiding disputes

Michael Swartz of WeirFoulds LLP has discovered a passion for the construction industry and its challenges. The 36-year-old lawyer is showing the way forward for even younger people by teaching part-time at George Brown College in Toronto while contributing to the community through the Toronto Construction Association (TCA) and other organizations.

Swartz, called to the bar in 2002, says he is fortunate to have the mentorship of fellow WeirFoulds lawyer Glenn Ackerley, who is also the TCA's Chairman.

Times change and industry practices evolve, but the fundamental rules remain consistent, Swartz indicates.

"Clarity is the big issue in this industry. People are not being specific or clear enough in their agreements. Parties to a transaction can end up with polar opposite views about what is to take place."

The solution, as old as the traditional handshake based on trust and integrity, is to "mean what you say, and say what you mean, and be clear about it." Things work out best when informal agreements based on trust, experience and mutual respect go hand-in-hand with clear and properly drafted legal contracts, which set things out from the beginning and include appropriate dispute resolution resources.

"There is one classic case where a misplaced comma in a document meant a million dollar dispute," Swartz says.

"One of the problems arising from modern technology is that email has al-



Michael Swartz

most eliminated the necessity for the painstaking care and thoughtfulness that would have been put into a more formally written letter in the past," Swartz says. "Messages are often written hastily, with a relaxed attitude toward precision and formality. The result is that the writer can fail to express the correct intent or spirit of an agreement."

"After the message is released, it can be interpreted by another party as being unresponsive, ambiguous, or completely opposite to what the writer intended to convey," he says.

The solution is simple. Conclude your informal conversations and even email exchanges, then draft a simple and clear contract outlining your agreements.

Swartz teaches these principles to students at George Brown College. He also spends time with the TCA's Young Construction Executives Club.

"The club is a great way for us to get to know each other on a one-on-one basis - things like tree plantings, the Golf Day, TCA Members' Day, and other events," he says. "This enhances and drives the respect we have for each other. It gets rid of the anonymity and allows you to connect faces, names and voices within the industry."

He also serves on the Sherwood Park Advisory Committee in North Toronto.

Swartz can be reached by phone at (416) 947-5024 or by emailing mswartz@weiroulds.com.

The Toronto Construction Association's Young Construction Executives Club (YCEC)

The Toronto Construction Association's Young Construction Executives Club (YCEC) has helped create leadership and networking opportunities for younger TCA members since 1994.

The club, with more than 370 members who are 35 years old or younger is currently chaired by Joe Perry of EllisDon Corporation.

Matt Stainton reached beyond the YCEC in 2007 to become that year's overall association Chair.

According to an article in the Daily Commercial News and Construction Record, Stainton discovered real networking value in the TCA. "Once I got there, I saw a lot of things that interested me in terms of both personal and career growth and helping out the industry."

The TCA named an award after him, the Matt Stainton Top Gun Award, in recognition of his success in recruiting new members, the DCN reported. "He has won his own award five times. In 1999, Stainton received the TCA's Distinguished Volunteer of the Year Award."

The TCA's YCEC mission statement says the club's objective is to "develop an

informal communication network amongst young future executives" to:

- Promote networking relationships within the construction industry
- Develop a forum to establish industry contacts and leads;
- Provide information and industry activities and opportunities that will enhance and profit the individual(s) and their respective company(ies);
- Provide an opportunity for members to invest in their employees' development as the next generation of construction executives;
- Leadership development.

Club activities include educational "Lunch Bag and Breakfast Sizzlers" seminars, participation in the annual TCA Construction Day and networking activities including events such as a golf tournament, family skate, poper night, bonspiel curling, pub night, food drive, and working weekends.

Membership of the TCA YCEC not surprisingly is restricted to TCA members. If you are a member, to get on the mailing list, phone (416) 499-4000 ext 113 or email lvileneuve@tcaconnect.com.

WeirFoulds congratulates Michael Swartz on being recognized as a young leader in the construction industry. His dedication and contributions to the industry have been exemplary. We wish Michael continued success in his construction law career.

Glenn Ackerley
Partner and Chairman of the Toronto Construction Association

Congratulations Michael, from all of us at

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