SkillsUSA Career Expo & CEFGA Worlds of Construction 2018
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Corporate Strategy Essential to Retain Project Managers

Industry - University partnerships needed to grow talent pipeline

Kennesaw State University's Department of Construction Management and Bennett Thrasher, one of the country’s largest full-service certified public accounting firms, recently presented results of the second annual Georgia Construction Outlook Survey. The survey, which included responses from 154 Georgia-based private construction companies, yielded several takeaways.

Among the findings were:
- 94 percent of respondents reported a higher project backlog from the prior year.
- 78 percent of respondents projected an increase in revenue for the next year.
- Salaries for many positions increased by an average of 5.2 percent from 2016.

Even in a thriving industry, the survey revealed that one-third of the companies surveyed said recruiting and retaining qualified employees remains their biggest business challenge.

Most companies approach a client with a clear value proposition, segmentation, profitable fee structure, collateral, sales approach and brand. Yet when it comes to talent acquisition, many tend to abandon that similar strategy and focus on the immediate need, often relying solely on details provided in technical resumes.

Attracting talent is no different from acquiring and retaining clients. Companies need a corporate-level commitment and a well-defined talent acquisition strategy.

One solution is for corporations to form strong relationships with universities that can produce the talent they seek. KSU’s Department of Construction Management offers an ACCE-accredited bachelor’s degree program in construction management with five in-demand concentrations: general, land development, specialty construction, heavy construction and facilities management. A new concentration in home building will launch this fall.

What makes these academic programs unique is that each student learns how to apply knowledge and technology to solve real-world construction problems. Local construction projects, combined with strong industry support, provide vast laboratory opportunities and educational resources for Kennesaw State students.

KSU’s Construction Management Department also fosters strong relationships with leading construction companies via a 34-person industry advisory board, featuring representatives from Chick-fil-A, Albion, Bennett Thrasher, Holder, Turner, McCarthy, CW Matthews, Americas Home Place, Hogan and Parrish Construction Group, among other respected companies in the greater Atlanta area. The board’s objective is to ensure that students meet the educational and career needs of the industry from an employer’s perspective. Through their organizational structure, the board recommends actions to the depart-
ment to ensure that learning outcomes at the program level meet or exceed employer needs.

The board also plays a critical role in the development of state-of-the-art facilities and instructional technologies at KSU, and board members review capstone and research projects designed to benchmark the quality of graduates as well as identify areas for improvement. Fundraisers, organized by the advisory board, provide the department with crucial funding for student activities, equipment and significant scholarship opportunities.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, construction manager positions will grow 11 percent from 2016 to 2026, which is greater than the average for all listed occupations.

Kennesaw State students who graduate from the construction management program have held internships while earning their degrees, and many receive full-time positions upon graduation with the companies they met through the various career fairs and activities held throughout the academic year.

While it’s a perfect time to obtain the education necessary to become a professional in the booming construction management industry, companies should be prepared to ride the wave of talent that programs like KSU’s can produce.

For more information about Kennesaw State’s construction management programs, visit http://cacm.kennesaw.edu/MSCM.

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