

The construction management program continues to grow in its second semester of being offered at A-State

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SPECIAL TO THE HERALD

The Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approved the Bachelor of Science in Construction Management program in April 2022. In Fall 2022, Arkansas State University offered the program exclusively on campus. This semester, construction management can be taken both on-campus and online.

The construction management program curriculum stated program graduates will have the knowledge and technical, administrative and communication skills necessary to succeed in the construction industry; students must demonstrate the knowledge and skills to perform with respect to scope, schedule, budget, quality, safety and the environment.

Alexandr Sokolov, assistant professor of engineering management and construction management, directs the program.

"We have a very unique program," Sokolov said. "It's only just a matter of time before this picks up national recognition."

Sokolov said the program includes classes that teach equal parts engineering and technical management. The construction management program comprises 10 new construction management courses designed for the program, seven relatively new courses from the Engineering Management Systems Bachelor of Science program and eight courses from other fields relevant to the construction management program.

Sokolov said the construction management program features technical, application-based and soft-skill courses. He said students in the program will learn construction principles, construction technology, time management and how to use tools and technology relevant to construction management.

Sokolov said the more technical courses include

Architectural CAD, Building Information Modeling and Structural Blueprints. He said courses like Technical Entrepreneurship and Project Management and Practice focus on soft skills. Sokolov said construction management differs from the other engineering programs offered at A-State.

"The way we structure the courses is very unique and probably one of the most unique programs in the state," Sokolov said. "If not the country."

Sokolov said the program is unique because it is synchronously taught. Sokolov said instructors in the program live stream their lectures online so students can join the lecture via Zoom and learn synchronously with students on campus.

He said lectures are also recorded so students can still access content at their leisure. Sokolov said he thinks the construction management program is one of the only synchronously taught construction management programs in the nation.

Sokolov said the structure of the program will connect students with alumni around the world.

He said he thinks the synchronous nature of the program will be a driving factor for its success.

Compared to other engineering programs, Sokolov said the math requirement for construction management is low. He said the program only requires a Calculus I or equivalent course. He said if a student can pass Calculus I or an equivalent program such as business or engineering calculus, they can complete the program.

Sokolov said of the 12 students currently in the program, six are enrolled online and six are enrolled on campus. Sokolov said while these numbers appear low, they're very high for such a young program.

Colton Stark, a construction management junior from Malden, Missouri, said he enjoys being in the program.

He said Green Construction is his favorite course so far.

"If you enjoy construction and you still want to be under the engineering umbrella, but engineering is not for you, then this is the place to go for sure," Stark said. "It's welcoming, it's fun to learn about and there's stuff you've never even thought about."

Sokolov said the demand for graduates with a construction management degree is very high.

Sokolov said he thinks 90% of students in the construction management program at his previous institution earned full-time industry positions before they graduated.

"I see this program exactly mirroring that job-placement level," Sokolov said.

Jim Chidester, an instructor of construction management at A-State, said he agrees with Sokolov. Chidester said he has spoken with contacts in the construction industry and raised awareness of the construction management program at A-State.

"Large contractors especially are talking to us now about, you know, 'How soon can you get us graduates?'" Chidester said.

Chidester said a construction management degree enables graduates to obtain positions in project management, business development, supervision, and bid estimating. He said he thinks the program will appeal to students who want to be in the field rather than at a desk.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in 2021 that, nationally, construction management graduates made a median salary of \$98,890 a year. Sokolov said while Northeast Arkansas is below the national average, students can still expect high pay in their careers.

Sokolov said due to the rising demand for construction management, he voiced his interest in starting a construction management program at A-State to Abhijit Bhattacharyya, the dean of the college of computer science and engineering.

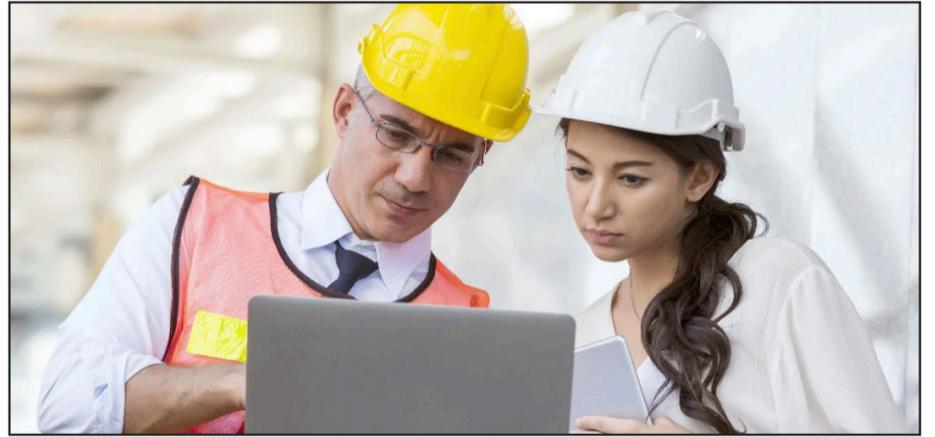


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The construction management major is in its second semester of being offered at A-State.

While working at a previous institution, Sokolov said he was an assistant professor and coordinator of the undergraduate and graduate construction management programs. He said the construction management program at the previous institution was highly ranked and he knew a similar program at A-State would also be successful.

Sokolov said before any structure was set up for the program, he and the dean of computer science and engineering spoke with companies in the construction industry to determine what exactly they wanted out of graduates. Sokolov said they tailored the program based on feedback from the industry and showcased a tentative plan to companies in the industry. Sokolov said the industry loved it.

Sokolov said the next phase of creating the program was presenting it to the College of Computer Science and Engineering Undergraduate Curriculum Committee. After being approved, he said the University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee reviewed the program to ensure it was a good fit for A-State. Finally, the Arkansas Division of Higher Education evaluated the program.

After the ADHE approved the program on April 27, 2022, Sokolov said A-State initiated recruitment for one full-time instructor. "Jim applied and we're

very happy to have him," Sokolov said. Chidester said, "I'm happy to be here."

Chidester said he thinks he was hired as an instructor of construction management at A-State because of his almost 30 years of experience. Chidester said he is one of only about 250 Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Fellows in the world. Sokolov said LEED

Fellows are the worldwide leading experts in their field. Sokolov said continuous commitment, leadership and peer approval are what make LEED Fellows special.

Chidester said he has the book knowledge but also brings his real-world construction management experience into the classroom.

"Whether that's bringing in actual plans and specs from jobs I've worked on," Chidester said. "Or taking a field trip to a LEED-certified building to look at all the green, sustainable aspects of the building."

Noah Roberson, a construction management senior from Swifton, Arkansas, said Chidester's experience in the field benefits students taking his courses. Roberson said Chidester shares stories and offers something to the class that a textbook simply cannot.

Stark said the professors in the construction management program are the most effective educators he's had of all the majors he's been in. Stark said he feels more involved in the

program because of how new it is. He said professors consider his opinions and utilize his input.

He said he feels like more than just a number in the program.

Chidester said the program is in a growth pattern. He said as the program grows, he and Sokolov will help establish student chapters and seek third-party certifications. Chidester said they'll also look for extracurricular activities to engage students, such as competitions and conferences.

"The book learning is important, obviously, but those extra programs are also important," Chidester said. "Because you get hands-on experience, you get to present in front of your peers, you get to compete, which is always fun. We will do all of those things as we move forward, it'll just take a little time to get there."

Sokolov said the construction management program will likely increase the visibility of A-State.

Chidester said he wants A-State to be the go-to university for construction management.

"Not just in the state of Arkansas, not just in the region. I want a kid that lives in Iowa that says 'I want to major in construction management' and the first thing somebody says is 'You need to go to Arkansas State,'" Chidester said. "That's our goal for the program."

Sokolov said they're on a trajectory to meet their goal.

Carl Cates to step down as dean of College of Liberal Arts and Communications

A-STATE NEWS

PRESS RELEASE

Dr. Carl Cates announced to his chairs and faculty today his decision to step down as the dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Communication later this year.

Departing as dean effective June 30, Cates is returning to his academic consulting practice.

Arriving at Arkansas State in 2016, Cates was selected as the inaugural dean of the newly structured College of Liberal Arts and Communication. During his tenure, Cates successfully guided the melding of three separated colleges into a single cross-disciplinary unit.

"It has been my honor to be a part of this transformation at

Arkansas State, and I will always remember the great things we achieved together," Cates said.

The opening of the Windgate Center for Three-Dimensional Arts was a major achievement of his tenure at A-State. The \$7 million facility provided modern work facilities for the Department of Art + Design and replaced a decades-old Art

Annex. He was also a part of the early planning collaboration for the coming Windgate Hall of Art and Innovation.

Interim Provost Len Frey thanked Cates for his years of service to the institution.

"Carl played an integral role in guiding the launch of our College of Liberal Arts and Communication, and Arkansas

State will always remember him as the inaugural dean of CLAC," Frey said. "We wish him well in his future endeavors."

In his announcement to the campus today, Frey also noted that the selection of an interim dean and the process for selection of a permanent dean would be determined in the next few weeks.



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Dr. Carl Cates

MINOR, CONTINUED

In the summer, she will teach Enslaved Women in the Americas, an online course that will examine the experiences of enslaved women in South America, the Caribbean and North America.

"We will look at how enslaved women faced unique oppressions and also how they resisted slavery in

myriad ways," McNamee said.

In the fall, McNamee will teach The History of Sexuality, examining the longer political, legal, social and cultural fights for both women's and LGBTQ+ rights.

"Obviously, sexuality and gender are very connected," McNamee said. "We will look at how these categories of

heterosexual and homosexual, masculine and feminine developed and changed over time. My History of Sexuality course will also be very trans-inclusive."

Dr. Kristin Ruccio, a five year staff employee and director of first-year writing, taught a special topic course (courses that are not originally part of

the curriculum but offered for the interest made by students or the professor) called Feminist Rhetorics in the past school year.

"What we find, probably in the last five to 10 years, it's programs like this are under attack, to the point that they're actually being banned in state schools. Which is fairly horrifying to me as someone

who values learning about history," Ruccio said. "I tend to think of societal change in terms of pendulum swings. I've seen it swing back and forth about three times in my life. I think it's important to learn these historical realities and social facts so that we don't repeat them."



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Heather McNamee