



Intern Miguel Gayton stands in front of Sanger Unified School District's new Educational Complex. The project is comprised of an academic and administrative building, a multi-purpose facility, a central plant, and corresponding onsite and off-site improvements. The project has an expected completion date of 2020. Inset Photo: Miguel checks a set of plans for the Sanger Educational Complex project.

FRESNO STATE STUDENTS GET HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE AT HARRIS CONSTRUCTION



As an intern in the construction industry, students are suddenly on the inside track of seeing real projects go from a set of plans and a dirt field to large-scale buildings.

Their onsite experiences, combined with everything they're learning at Fresno State, are all beginning to make a lot more sense!

Harris Construction, located in Fresno, currently has 11 interns on staff, and all are from the Fresno State Construction Management (CM) program. One of those interns, Miguel Gayton, plans to graduate in the spring with a bachelor's in construction management and a minor in general business.

Miguel began his life in Mexico as a fourth child to farm-worker laborer parents. At the age of 13 he knew he wanted not only a better life, but also a better education so he made the journey to the U.S. alone. He stayed with an aunt and uncle in Fresno and worked and studied hard to accomplish his dreams.

At Hoover High School, Miguel took a basic construction class. Then he took a framing class. One day that class took a field trip to a local jobsite where the Project Manager talked to the students and explained what he did during the day from start to finish - 10 calls a day, meetings, along with the

other day-to-day processes. Miguel knew in an instant, deciding then and there, what he wanted to do as a career.

Miguel then joined the Construction Management program at Fresno State. As a first generation in his family to attend college, Miguel had to navigate it all on his own. But he soon found his professors were there to help him, that they have real construction experience in the field and are great at advising the students. One professor, Professor Lloyd Crask, has helped Miguel significantly. Prof. Crask worked in heavy civil construction and has really taught Miguel about getting along with subcontractors and the culture of a company, and how to meet the expectations of the company for which they work. Miguel knows he can go to Prof. Crask whenever he needs advice.

The staff at Fresno State suggests its students attend the Company Presentations, where construction companies looking for interns present and describe their company and the open intern positions.

"Harris Construction was my top consideration for an internship," said Miguel, "as they are the largest general contractor based in the Central Valley and they have different career path opportunities including field engineers and project engineers. My goal is to gain the experience needed to become a project manager someday.

"Being at Harris and on a big jobsite has been very educational for me," said Miguel. "I read about all of this in school, but now I get to see it all come to life. What surprised me the most is the work is a lot more than just construction. It is

paperwork, permits, submittals, approvals, contractor meetings, owner meetings... and I have found that I really like it all. My advice to other interns is you have to take the initiative to learn, to excel, and to never be afraid to ask questions. And at school, being part of the CM clubs like the AGC and the Reno competition are critical for your success and personal development. The seminars, learning about safety, and new trends in construction combined with the professors have all really helped me do well."

Ryan Diel, currently the Chief Operating Officer and a 22-year project management veteran for Harris Construction is actively involved in choosing and hiring the Fresno State interns.

"Interns are the future of our company and it's really a mutually beneficial relationship," said Diel. "They are part of our team to both contribute AND to learn. Fresno State is preparing these students for entry-level positions in the construction field. Once the students join our team, we usually place them on large, active jobsites where they can bring together their education with real construction experience. We are fortunate the Fresno State CM program is continuing to blossom; now we might be able to conduct 4-5 CM intern interviews a week. This is giving us a great opportunity to engage with students to see if there's a match before putting them on a career path at Harris. Fresno State is providing a great benefit to our industry and these students."

Harris' Director of Student Internships is Jadee Mejorado. She enjoys working with interns and is always open to meeting new people to consider for the company's program. If you know a student who is interested in becoming an intern in the construction industry, the company suggests having them reach out to Jadee directly.

But not all CM students want to be project managers.

Harris Intern Chris Prince had a goal to attend Fresno State since he was quite young. One day, when he and his dad were watching a 5-story steel erection project in north Fresno, they saw a welder, up high in an angel's wing work platform, wearing a hood, beginning to weld. As the sparks flew, young Chris' eyes opened wide and he shouted out loud, "What is THAT?!?"

Chris' family was in Ag, so seeing a guy welding three stories up was a sight to behold. Chris was just staring at it in awe and immediately knew the construction industry was for him. Over time, Fresno State's CM program became his goal to help make that dream a reality.

Once at Fresno State, Chris has had a great experience in the CM program. He appreciates having such great professors and advisors. Chris is especially complimentary of the CM Department Chair, Brad Hyatt, who Chris says is doing great things - including bringing together Harris and other construction firms from around the state, involving the community in the CM program, and encouraging students to engage back into the community. Hyatt meets with the students one-on-one and helps them with their own specific career path.

Chris said, "Professor Hyatt really motivates all of the students and he pushes us to be the best we can be."

But unlike Miguel, Chris isn't working toward becoming a project engineer and ultimately a project manager. Instead Chris has his eye set on becoming a Safety Director and possibly move into Risk Management. Most often, future safety managers get their degree in Industrial Hygiene, but Chris felt that obtaining his CM degree would better prepare him to understand safety as it relates to the construction field. Chris is currently a part-time Safety Coordinator at Harris Construction.

"Harris has created a great safety program," said Chris, "that



Safety is a top priority for Harris Construction. Project Intern Chris Prince is learning on-the-job about Harris' Safety Program and has the opportunity to visit different jobsites to help check adherence to the company's safety program. Chris poses at the Matilda Torres High School project for Madera Unified School District which is comprised of single- and two-story buildings for classrooms, science labs, career technical education, administrative offices, library/media center, health clinic, cafeteria, gymnasium, locker/shower, performing arts theater, aquatics complex, play courts, playfields, parking and ancillary facilities totaling approximately 277,000 sq. ft.

Harris Construction | Continued from 15

provides the correct tools and knowledge for us to be successful in the building and safety-aspect of construction.

"I always wanted to work at Harris," said Chris, "because working for Harris allows me to be part of the growth of the Central Valley. It allows me to be part of the camaraderie that is built on a jobsite. These jobsites begin to feel like family, and I get to be part of the process of sending everyone home safe. That's why I enjoy safety."

Another project intern at Harris is Alma Jimenez. She too was fascinated with design and construction early in life. When she was eight years old, she began drawing, and re-drawing, her dream home - a big two-story house with her very own bedroom, a big yard, and of course a pool. In junior high, she learned how to draw plans by hand. At Edison High School she took several years of architecture and in her senior year, she also took concurrent architectural and construction classes at City College, riding there on the city bus every day after high school to attend her classes. In one of her college classes, they built a house. They built the foundation, framed the house, and completed all of the rough-in during the first semester, and then completed the home's interior in the second semester.

Yet, even after she had five years of architectural design classes, including time at Cal Poly Pomona, she no longer felt the passion for design. "That house project changed me," said Alma. "I realized I loved how buildings are MADE, not just drawn, so I transferred to Fresno State to attend their renowned CM program.

"It can be intimidating coming into a new school and developing new friendships," said Alma, "but my advisor, Mr. Hyatt, is always very helpful. If I have a question he'll do whatever it takes to get the answer. All of the professors at Fresno State want to see us succeed and graduate. They want us to go out into the industry - and then come back to help future students in their competition teams and Industry clubs. Our CM program at Fresno State has many opportunities and resources to help us reach whatever position we see ourselves achieving in the industry."

Regarding her internship with Harris, Alma said, "When Harris Construction presented at a Fresno State/CM luncheon seeking interns, I knew they were the company for me. The other companies that presented were either small or were located far away. Harris is doing a lot of big projects here in the Central Valley trying to make Fresno better than it is already. I wanted to be a part of that and once they did their presentation I started noticing their jobsites (and signs) are everywhere! I'm glad I chose Harris and really enjoy the people. It's a great internship experience for me."

Richard Spencer, and his wife Karen, who have owned Harris Construction since 1986 are pleased to have so many students from the CM program at Harris. "We are very supportive of the Fresno State CM program and proud of our relationship with Brad Hyatt," said Richard. "As the interns mentioned, Brad is a very capable person, a good leader, and because of it we are having great success with the pool of talent he presides over.

"The CM program is doing great things for the construction industry in the Central Valley," said Richard. "As our commu-



Alma Jimenez, Project Intern at Harris Construction, in one of the Harris job trailers and on an excavator in Reedley for a new project for Kings Canyon Unified School District. The project will include two phases of modernization at Reedley High School.



nity grows there is ever more pressure on Brad's department and others like it - all designed to help students and young people. We are pleased and proud to employ a large number of students from the program and are excited about our relationship with the many entrepreneurial efforts at Fresno State, including the Laval Entrepreneur Mentor (LEM) program and the Craig School of Business."

Fresno State is educating and preparing students not just in the CM program but throughout the campus for the betterment of the community and the students themselves. If you and your business are not actively involved with Fresno State, please consider an investment of your time, talent and treasure. These students are the future of our businesses and our community. Not just at Harris Construction, but hopefully at your business, too. Get involved!