



Valley ROP Students tour Phase II of the Sanger Education Complex being built by Harris Construction. The initial new High School buildings will be open in late 2023.

New Internship Program Deemed a Success for Harris Construction & Valley ROP



California, and healthcare organizations.

The company is committed to providing career opportunities for young people including through its annual paid Summer Internship program. In the past, Harris Construction has hired 10-15 of the most qualified Construction Management college students from Fresno State, Cal Poly, Boise State, etc., for the summer. After the summer internship is over, only the top performers are considered for continuing at Harris for its Fall internship cohort.

However, in recent years, Harris joined forces with a new source of possible interns: Valley ROP (Regional Occupational Programs) – which serves freshmen through senior students in high school. Would these exceptionally young people have what it takes to compete for the coveted internship positions at Harris? Only time would tell.

About Valley ROP: It was formed in 1951 to provide employable skills, including CTE (Career Technical Education)

Harris Construction is the oldest - and largest - locally-owned construction company based in the Central Valley, and specializes in building projects for school districts, universities, cities, counties, the State of

classes and pathways, and now includes over 8,000 south-valley students in the school districts of Cutler-Orosi, Dinuba, Kingsburg, Kings Canyon, Parlier, Sanger, and Selma.

Last year, the Valley ROP team hand-picked 10 top student candidates for the Harris team to meet, all from its Building and Construction Trades pathway. The students did a walk-through on a large construction project that Harris is building for Sanger Unified, toured Harris' corporate office in Fresno, attended a meeting with Harris' top management, and went through intensive individual interviews.

Initially, Harris Construction considered offering summer internship positions to only 1-2 of the Valley ROP students. But after meeting the students, everyone agreed that there were actually four qualified Valley ROP candidates – all of whom would start attending various colleges in the fall of 2022 to continue their Construction Management education. All four were hired by Harris, taking up four of its 15 summer internship openings for 2022. The four were placed on various Harris jobsites throughout the Valley and Central Coast - alongside the university/CM students - to work with experienced Harris project management and field staff.

The Valley ROP program and its staff indeed succeeded in getting qualified and skilled students to the interviews and into the Harris Summer Internship program. During the summer, two of the Harris interns from Valley ROP went above and beyond to

earn their keep - alongside three of their older, college-attending fellow interns – with the invitation to continue their internship at Harris after the summer.

Meet Harris' two Full-time Valley ROP Interns: Jaime and Cesar

Harris Field Engineer Intern, Jaime Castro, is now an 18-year-old student at Reedley College and is one of the youngest interns at Harris. His dad was a construction worker, and following in his dad's career path, Jaime took four years of construction management and active hands-on classes at Dinuba High School through the Valley ROP program. In those classes, he worked on designing and understanding project drawings, plus he helped build sheds and a 3 bedroom, 2 bathroom mobile home.

Cesar Rocha, age 19, is also a Harris Field Engineer Intern who joined Harris through the Valley ROP/Harris 2022 Summer Internship Program. He is now attending Fresno State for his CM degree. Cesar's brother, age 16, is currently in the Valley ROP Construction program and hopes to follow in his brother's career path.

"These young Valley ROP graduates are doing better than we ever imagined," said Steven Valdez, Project Manager for Harris Construction. "During the interview process we liked these students for their perceived skill levels, but you never really know until you get them on your jobsite, boots on-the-ground, interacting with subcontractors and then checking every step of the jobsite multiple times every day alongside our 20- to 30-year veteran Harris employees. These Valley ROP kids are amazing. Cesar is on my jobsite; he's a natural! He wants to learn, he's eager to help, is proactive, and ambitious. He seamlessly adapted into a really large project and fits in his role like a hand in a glove. I'd take more Valley ROP-trained intern employees on my jobsite anytime!"

"We give a lot of credit to the instructors at Valley ROP for this joint internship program's success," said Mike Marsh, VP Field Operations for Harris Construction. "Their hard work and



ABOVE: Harris Project Manager, Steven Valdez, discusses project plans with Valley ROP students during a student tour of Sanger Unified's Education Complex construction jobsite. BELOW: Cesar Rocha, Harris Field Engineer Intern, is working on the Sanger Unified Education Complex, helping coordinate subcontractors and walking the jobsite to check progress for about six hours each day.



dedication to these students to introduce construction into their lives is huge for both our industry and for these capable young adults. Like Valley ROP, Harris also believes in training young people to be 'true builders' at an early age. These kids are learning our trade – and being trained by the best to be the next successful generation in construction. We are excited by this new partnership."

Due to the positive outcome with Valley ROP's students, the Harris Internship Recruitment Program is in full swing with Valley ROP again this year, being led by Harris' Intern Coordinator, Ashlee Horner. Tours and interviews happened in mid-April and a group of Valley ROP students will be offered internships for this coming summer of 2023.

"Things in life just happen for a reason. And it certainly takes a village to raise kids," said Fabrizio Lofaro, Superintendent for Valley ROP. "The partnership between Valley ROP and Harris Construction has created an amazing internship opportunity for our construction students. This connection provides our students with a career, post-secondary education, and real-life work experiences. These young adults are living proof that they really accomplished something very, very special – and they should be very proud of their success. Harris Construction rocks!"



Harris Field Engineer Intern, Jaime Castro, is currently on the Child Development Center jobsite at Reedley College (State Center Community College District).