

Taking Up Opportunities

Wyatt Yenney, one of 30 students to participate in the University of Wyoming's first Construction Management program, is a Wyoming son, born and bred. He was born in Sheridan and later moved to Rock Springs, where he completed high school in 2018.

Highly motivated to stay in Wyoming, but unsure how to do that, because of the lack of training in the field he thought he would like to have.

Fortunately, during High School, he participated in Rock Springs High School's *Energy Resource Academy* that offers real-life, hands-on training in a variety of fields. This is where he began his journey towards his construction interests, being fully encouraged by the Academy instructors to take up job shadowing opportunities.

His first internship was the result of a job shadowing opportunity at the Jim Bridger Power Plant owned by PacifiCorp. It was there that he met Charlie Barnum, who provided the mentoring he needed to keep going.

After graduating high school, he attended Western Wyoming College for his freshman year. As a result of his ongoing interest in construction management, he was able to spend his summer working in the field while earning money for school. This summer job – available to him because of his networking in the Academy - had him operating heavy construction equipment. At about the same time, the University of Wyoming opened its doors to the first class of the construction management program.

He credits the rigor of the program, which includes mandatory attendance to 5 SOAR events on campus. These events bring companies, who make presentations on a variety of topics related to their industry, which – in turn – offers networking and internship opportunities. He believes this is a strong component of the program because it is so relatable to class material. The company representatives typically offer job and internship opportunities as well.

As a University of Wyoming student ambassador, he further showed his interpersonal skills by acting as host of luncheons and guest speakers for the Construction Management Club. He highly recommends taking up every opportunity that comes your way, because you never know what will happen, plus it helps you to enhance your ability to speak with a variety of people – which is something a project manager needs to be able to do.

While a University of Wyoming student, he was able to take advantage of two different internships in the state of Wyoming. The man he shadowed during high school, Charlie Barnum, was the person in charge of his first internship at Barch Industries, thus completing the circle of mentorship.

The second internship, at Searle Brothers Construction Company, allowed him to use his developing project management skills in a very real and practical way. Wyatt was able to be a part of the Searle Brothers Construction project management and bid team. During the internship he was able to learn and grow in many areas of project management such as cost estimating, material take-offs, pre-construction tasks, and scheduling. Searle Brothers later offered him a full-time position and, so, he leaves the University of Wyoming fully employed with an incredible job opportunity in project management. Wyatt says this job offer is unmatched by any other company, and it was an easy decision that he is excited about.

The thing that surprised Wyatt the most about the Construction Management program is learning about the variety of construction projects that include residential, commercial, industrial, and other sectors, and the variety of companies that put those projects together. Up to this point, he only ever in depth knew about residential and commercial projects because his grandfather owned a construction company in Bend, Oregon.

He believes his University of Wyoming training provides him with the depth and breadth of knowledge and skills he needs to be in the construction field. There is only one thing he would like to see incorporated into the program and that is a greater variety of scholarships specifically for Construction Management students. While he was a Hathaway

Scholarship recipient, this scholarship is limited and he would like to see more students benefit from financial support, because financial barriers can make it a challenge to complete college and university.

This first graduating class of students, all duly employed, will leave the University of Wyoming with the skills needed to ply their trade – that of project managers - throughout the region. This provides Wyatt, and his cohort, with the opportunity to stay in Wyoming, earning the wages he needs to provide him with the kind of life he desires.