

**Five-Year Program Review
Committee Report**

Weber State University
Parson Construction Management Program

Submitted by:

Jared R. Baker, P.G.
Lecturer for Construction Management
Department of Engineering and Technology
Southern Utah University
Cedar City, Utah 84720
jaredbaker@suu.edu
<https://www.suu.edu/cose/et/staff.html>

Kendall Smith
Vice-President
Hughes General Contractors
Kendall@hughesgc.com
www.hughesGC.com

Nicole Flink
Assistant Professor
Weber State University
Nicoleflink@weber.edu
801-626-6904

External Review Report submitted by Jared Baker, Lecturer, Construction Management, Southern Utah University; Kendall Smith, Vice President, Hughes General Contractors; and Dr. Nicole Flink, Assistant Professor, Department of Professional Sales at Weber State University.

The review team visited on March 21, 2023, to review the Parsons Construction Management program. The visit included a tour and face-to-face interviews with Weber State University administration, faculty, and staff. Notable individuals included the Dean of the College of Engineering, Dr. David Ferro; Department Chair of Construction Management, Pieter van der Have; Program Coordinator, Russell Butler; Academic Advisors, Parson Construction Management faculty & staff, and current students of the CMT program. The reviewer's findings indicate that the future of the Parson Construction Management Program at Weber State University delivers a quality student experience and has great potential for the program to maintain diverse growth. This report is based on the site-visit and provides external review of the program's strengths, challenges, opportunities, and recommendations.

1. Introduction

The mission of the Parson Construction Management program is to prepare students from diverse backgrounds for success in any sector of the construction industry. Since the last five-year review, the official name of the program was changed from the "Parson Construction Management Technology (CMT) Program," to the "Parson Construction Management (CM) Program" during 2019. Additionally, the Building Design and Construction (BDC) program and Interior Design (ID) program were added to comprise the existing department. Further, the Parson CM program has offered B.S. degrees with an emphasis in Construction Management and Facilities Management, but due to low enrollment the decision was made to that classes will no longer be offered for a facilities management emphasis as of fall semester 2024. The program also offers an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree. The review committee has evaluated the outlined standards, as such notes the following:

2. Strengths

The review committee observed and noted several strengths of the CM program. We highlight the following:

- a. The CM program provides a high-level of value with its mission to serve non-traditional students through evening courses combined with relevant industry experience provided by faculty and peers in class. (Standard A: Mission)
- b. In addition to classroom activities, students participate in competitions, further enhancing their skills and knowledge of the field. The program's dedication to

providing students with a well-rounded education is evident in the range of experiences it offers. Specifically, the annual ASC (Associated Schools of Construction) competition provides excellent experiential learning. (Standard B: Curriculum)

- c. Students excel in night classes which allow them to work and get experience in the industry. Students interviewed reflected that they will have four years of relevant industry experience upon completion of the bachelor's degree. (Standard B: Curriculum)
- d. Curriculum (specifically course work) is adjusted based on results from the AIC test. This is successful as weaknesses have been identified in the past, changes made, and improvement has been shown. (Standard C: Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment).
- e. The CM program has a strong track record on the AIC exam, with recent results indicating an average score of 225 for spring 2022, compared to the national average of 214. The program primarily caters to non-traditional students, with evening classes, but recent initiatives have successfully attracted more traditional students. Additionally, a pathways program in collaboration with the Associated General Contractors and the State of Utah provides local high school students with scholarships. In response to areas where students have not consistently scored higher than the national average, the faculty proposed curriculum changes that have been approved for inclusion in the fall 2023 catalog (Standard H: Results of Previous Program Reviews).
- f. Students commented that many of the faculty go out of their way to help students be successful in the classroom and to make industry connections for employment. Faculty and adjunct professors are required to have industry experience along with a degree which increases the value of teaching provided in the program (Standard E: Faculty).
- g. Department and adjunct faculty are industry experts who participate in summer employment in industry to provide more relevant instruction for their assigned classes (Standard E: Faculty).
- h. From the last review, the program was encouraged to increase traditional students in the program. Due to recent initiatives, an observed increase in the number of enrolled traditional students (Standard H: Results of Previous Program Reviews).
- i. A pathways program was created for the building sciences in conjunction with the Associated General Contractors and the State of Utah. One attractive benefit is that local High School students in six different northern Utah school districts can earn guaranteed four-year partial tuition scholarships to Weber State University (Standard G: Relationships with External Communities)

3. Challenges/Opportunities

The review committee observed and noted a few challenges and/or opportunities related to the CM program. The committee notes the following:

- a. Concepts are taught before technology is introduced which is great for conceptual learning, however some discussion that industry would like certain software applications taught, but the program recognizes it's hard to train on every software. The concern remains from industry that technology to enter the industry needs to be a competitive advantage for the students (Standard B: Curriculum)
- b. Some general education support courses such as math and physics create difficulty for some non-traditional students to register during the day and often can delay graduation timelines. (Standard D: Academic Advising)
- c. The program has a significant number of adjunct professors, and their industry experience is beneficial to students; however, compensation for adjuncts is low. The concern for adjuncts remaining committed given compensation concerns given that they are a fundamental pillar of the program support (Standard E: Faculty).

4. Recommendations

The review committee observed and noted several recommendations for change related to the CM program, outlined below:

- a. Recommend that the Advisory Board (IAB) take an active role in course content and advise on program technology. We recommend the following two areas:
 1. Course Review: IAB review the syllabi for each class and to suggest areas of improvement to keep pace with industry trends. (Standard F: Program Support)
 2. Technology Review: IAB review the technology offered to students in the classroom compared to what's used in the industry. The IAB can provide valuable insights into the best technology options to use in the classroom, ensuring that students are prepared for their future careers. Therefore, involving industry experts in deciding which technology to use in the classroom is advised to assist in selecting the best options (Standard B: Curriculum).
- b. The lack of accreditation may pose a continued concern. The program should pursue an appropriate external accreditation to replace the past accreditation that has lapsed. (Standard C: Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment).

5. Reviewers' Program Review Conclusion

The state of the current Parson Construction Management program appears in good health. This would include the student-centered focus, adequate support from administration, adequate funding, adequate facilities, strong enrollment, high demand for graduates, competitive salaries for graduates and growth potential of student enrollment and industry support.

In conclusion, the program caters well to non-traditional students and has a strong reputation within the industry. However, attracting traditional students remains a challenge due to scheduling conflicts. Graduates are well-prepared for various sectors of the construction industry, and the program is fully supported from the top. The faculty is qualified and well-liked, though the high number of adjunct professors raises concerns about the program's long-term sustainability. The curriculum appears to be relevant, but the IAB should play a more active role in reviewing syllabi, technology, and making course content suggestions. Overall, the mandatory student competitions and consideration of student feedback indicate a commitment to continuous improvement. The program's strong job placement record is a testament to its effectiveness, and accreditation is expected to further enhance its quality. As a review committee, we thank the program faculty and staff for the opportunity to provide this review.