

Correspondence

BOTTOM LINE VS. BROADER EDUCATION

The September "Notes From the Editor" were interesting. I've found that to get a design engineering job, technical adeptness—how many computer programs you know, your design experience, etc.—is of much greater value than any liberal arts classes, business knowledge, or even personality, to a point. I guess if you want someone to run calculations, all you need is a numbers person in a cubical. An educational institution, or at least an engineering college, generally wants to provide graduates with job skills, hence the reason for more technical classes.

I found this to be true. I had a Master's in Engineering Management, and an undergraduate double-major in civil engineering and Asian studies (liberal arts) with a minor in Japanese. I found the management and liberal arts classes made little, if any, difference in obtaining job offers. Perhaps my marketing skills were lacking but I got an A in marketing; not even my Eagle Scout award seemed to matter. I did get a job, but I ended up choosing construction for a while. After seven years in commercial construction I tried to get back into design engineering, hoping some construction experience would be an asset.

Actually, I was at a disadvantage because computer programs had evolved, as had the codes. And the engineering industry had not changed its desire for computer-program literacy and design experience to the exclusion of most everything else. I've been back in design for five years now and figure someday my other educational experiences will be of real value at work. But as long as our society focuses so much on the immediate bottom line, it's hard to see any change in hiring trends.

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ESTIMATING EDUCATION

I am not about to enter the argument concerning the value of liberal arts vs. additional technology. I feel that the average engineering curriculum, like that of architects and construction managers, is dreadfully lacking in real courses in construction estimating. Not the unit price, dollar-a-pound, cost-book nonsense favored by those seeking easy numbers, but the true "Devil is in the Details" determination of fabrication and erection costs for structural steel and miscellaneous metals.

The new Division Five Technical Committee of the American Society of Professional Estimators is gearing up to provide the educational and testing resources to our Society in particular, and to academia and the industry in general. We welcome inquiry and interaction.

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CREDIT DUE

I was pleased to see the brief article about the new cable-stayed bridge at Cape Girardeau, on page 18 of the October issue of *Modern Steel Construction*, but the article failed to mention the steel detailer, bridge designer and contractor.

For the record, the detailer was Tensor Engineering Company, which has detailed every cable-stayed bridge in this country during the last 10 years. The article goes on to mention T.Y. Lin but fails to mention the designer, the Kansas City office of HNTB.

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*Send letters to the editor and other
comments to Scott Melnick via e-mail
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