



The essential partnership: PCI and the PCI Foundation

Education about precast, prestressed concrete has always been an important role for PCI to play in the industry. Our body of knowledge isn't very useful if people haven't learned about it and can't apply it in practice. It is also a crucial element in helping to grow the precast concrete market.


Goal 2 of the PCI strategic plan is to “increase the relative market share of precast, prestressed concrete.” One of the essential strategies identified to achieve that goal is educating engineering and architectural students so they have familiarity and comfort with precast, prestressed concrete design and construction as they embark on their careers. My observation has been that our biggest competitor is not other building systems, per se, but that precast concrete was never considered—or knowledgeably considered—at all.

The PCI Foundation and its education activities at universities across the country are essential to that education strategy. Since 2007, the PCI Foundation has sponsored hands-on, experiential learning curricula at 23 different universities. The programs include architecture, engineering, construction management, and even some business school students. Faculty tell us that this kind of experiential learning is the future in education. The success of each program also depends greatly on the close involvement of one or more PCI producers so the students can experience design and production with precast concrete professionals who do it every day. The Project Spotlight on pages 27 and 28 of this issue highlights the precast studio at the University of Minnesota Duluth.

Across the country, the feedback continues to be similar in one important way as it relates to growing the market. As one professor put it so succinctly, “I had been here [at this prominent school of architecture] for more than 20 years and never heard the term precast ever mentioned. Since the Foundation program, precast is all anyone is talking about.”

As we continue to refine and roll out the “How Precast Builds” campaign to increase market share, one issue is becoming more and more a reality: education is local, but design is national. There is no telling where the next project in your city may actually be designed, and less and less of a chance that it will be in the same place the project is planned. And in these mobile times, there is no telling where that recent graduate may end up. The importance of maximizing the number of programs exposing the next generation of professionals to precast concrete has never been greater.

As we begin our journey into 2019 and beyond, I urge you to support the PCI Foundation, both professionally through your company and also personally. If you are planning to attend the PCI Convention at The Precast Show (and I hope you are), please support the casino night fundraiser Thursday evening.

PCI has set a goal to grow the industry. If you support that goal, if you support the education strategy to achieve that goal, please support the PCI Foundation. 

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