

MURRAY & DOWNS Newsletter

Volume 4, Issue 2, Fall 2005



El Dorado Center Expansion - Placerville, CA

Managing Expectations Communicate!

**Debra Smith,
Project Architect**

A college campus has many people involved in its day-to-day workings and operations.

These people include the administrators, the faculty, the maintenance staff, the students, the foundation, and ultimately the community, the true benefactors of an educated society.

- when all stakeholders can see the issues, a consensus can be achieved to best meet the needs of the most urgent requirements;

All of these people have expectations about what the mission of the college will be, what types of programs will be offered, how often these programs will be offered, who the staff will be, what type of facilities should be provided, and how much money will be spent to achieve these goals. When a new campus building project is started, this multitude of people with their varying expectations must be managed to have a successful project.

To manage these expectations, project development should focus upon the primary parties with a vested interest in the project. These decision makers, or stakeholders, need to understand the validity of all viewpoints that may be expressed. To achieve this, relationship building is paramount. Collaboration,

equity and commitment from all the stakeholders will allow the issues to be discussed and evaluated during the preliminary programming phase. For example, the needs of the growing economic sectors in a community should be weighed against the traditional staples of college programs - when all stakeholders can see the issues, a consensus can be achieved to best meet the needs of the most urgent requirements; i.e., whether to provide additional classrooms for an increased number of English as a Second Language sections or to provide new viticulture laboratories to offer new certificated

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Visit Our New Website



www.murraydowns.com

The Winter of Discontent To Bid, or Not to Bid

**Gerry Hughes
Estimating Specialist**

Rising oil prices, natural disasters, material shortages and ever-increasing labor costs all seem to be contributing to an unabated escalation of construction costs and a general discontent with the construction industry. Exacerbating this situation

is a strong demand locally for both contractors and subcontractors. For some trades, specifically Electrical and Mechanical, competitive bids can be hard to come by or even *non-existent*. In any case, a premium of 40% to 100% above "normal cost" is not uncommon for many trades.

The bad news in all this is that the current overall bid climate ("sellers market") and the rate of escalation (8-10%) are not likely to bring much relief to construction costs over the next few years.

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Tidbit

(Internal Office Communications)

Gutters

Heads up to watch for those conditions where there is an upper roof gutter with a downspout that dumps out onto a lower roof (rather than to grade). Invariably there is a stain that develops along the lower roof panel between the downspout outlet and the lower gutter. The dirt and "stuff" that accumulates (and rusts) in the gutter over time is washed out onto the lower metal roof with the potential for causing this staining. If possible, try to detail the downspouts running along the surface of the upper roof and discharging into the lower roof gutter.

Employee Profile

Justin Wise



Justin Wise joined Murray & Downs AIA-Architects, Inc. in early 2005. Before joining the firm, he attended Cosumnes River College where he graduated with his Associates of Science, Architectural Environmental

Design degree.

This two year program, offered through Los Rios Community College District, prepares students for the field of architecture by teaching them the fundamental concepts. Some of the class requirements include: Design Awareness, CADD, Problem Solving, Schematic Design, Color Theory, Spacial Theory, Design Communication, Engineering and Drafting.

Participation in architecturally related events is required along with special studies in environmental sustainability and energy conscious design. Upon completion, students will have satisfied the academic background and skills necessary to transfer with an advanced standing to an accredited four or five year program.

This program has given Mr. Wise a strong foundation to aid him in reaching the next level of his professional career. With the completion of his degree and his participation in the Intern Development Program (IDP), Justin will be able

to begin testing for his license in roughly three years. IDP, administered primarily by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB), was established to assist young professionals in attaining the experience needed to test for their architecture license.

Through a combination of construction experience and natural artistic skills, Justin found architecture to be a natural fit. Here at Murray & Downs, Justin is a junior drafter in our HealthCare Studio,

working on projects for UC Davis Medical Center and Marshall Medical Center. □

Managing Expectations

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Community and student involvement in these early programming stages allows comprehensive buy-in to the project as expectations are discussed and set in place as to what type of project is being developed and who the project is focused upon. If the students understand that their Student Center will come after the classrooms and laboratories, they will have more reason to encourage these instructional projects to move swiftly.

All stakeholder input is valuable to bringing a project to fruition, but the process still requires a leader to guide and focus the direction of the team to fulfill the greater mission of the campus. Campus leadership can be through the office of the president or provost, the planning department, or facilities & operations department, but an empowered visionary leader is required to dispel the perception of inequalities or indecisiveness. This ensures that the team does not falter in the process of project development. Both the owner and architect share this responsibility of facilitating communication and consensus building efforts for managing expectations. Open communication policies as the project proceeds will produce the support and expectations for success. Practical means of maintaining open communication on the campus include: a website page updated monthly with news about the project, campus newsletters with frequent updates, and authorized

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off the mark

by Mark Parisi

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CRC Police, Printing and Nurse Facility - Sacramento, CA



CRC Instructional Facility 12 - Sacramento, CA

Managing Expectations

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site visits while the project is under construction. Effective methods for the architectural and engineering team to maintain open communication lines with the stakeholders include: holding community meetings, extending distribution of meeting notes beyond the normal recipients, and regularly contributing to the campus website or newsletter to keep the campus abreast of decisions. The overall goals of these communication efforts are to build trust with the campus stakeholders, ensure that their expectations are heard early and agreed upon, and finally, to clearly show how these expectations are being met to the benefit of the college and its students. □

Staff News

Introducing Our New Staff:

Alex Cunningham – Boomerang! One of our Jr. Drafters, Alex left for the wilds of Montana but missed the excitement of working here at Murray & Downs. In addition to his Jr. Drafter duties, Alex also assists in our IT Dept.

Justin Wise – Justin is a graduate of Cosumnes River College with his associate degree in architecture. He joins us in the position of Jr. Drafter where he is already proving his ability to contribute to the project team.

Philip Husak – After years in the construction industry, Philip acquired a certification in AutoCAD. He is quickly learning our standards for construction documents and is providing valuable support on several of our projects.

Barbara Smith – Barbara joins the firm to fill the roll of Executive Assistant to our three Principals, Charlie, David and Michael. Her previous position was in the facilities department of the El Dorado Union High School District.

Stephen Roundtree – Stephen is a recent high school graduate working with us in the role of Jr. Drafter. With AutoCAD training through the local ROP program, Stephen came to Murray & Downs well-trained and ready to learn.

Sarah Jester – Sarah's first experience here at Murray & Downs was as a summer intern. She is now a senior in High School and with her home-school schedule, she is able to work with us on a part-time basis. She has proven herself as eager to learn and very capably completes all tasks put before her. □

Staff Promotions

Jeffrey Lubenko, Design Manager – Filling a newly created position in our organization as Design Manager, Jeffrey collaborates with our various Studio teams on their project design, provides opportunities for design training to our staff, and provides input on design issues across the organization. Jeffrey's talent for design is exceptional. His previous professional experience includes the design of the City of West Sacramento Civic Center and the Butte County Courthouse Expansion.

Del Horne, Production Manager – Del has been promoted to the position of Production Manager. He has the responsibility to coordinate and supervise the efforts of the staff members within the drafting and production pool. He also works with these individuals to determine professional development goals and training needs. Del has performed successfully in the role of Project Manager since coming to our firm three years ago and looks forward to this challenging position.

Andrea Walker, Marketing Coordinator – Andrea has been promoted to a full-time marketing position. She is a graduate of Sacramento State University with her degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing. With her help we are able to take our marketing strategies to the next level and accomplish more than ever before. □

Trends in Higher Education

Only 55% of American students who start college complete their degrees within six years.

Between early 2000 and early 2001, 46 percent of adults in the US participated in some type of adult education, not including full-time attendance at a postsecondary institution. By contrast, only 22 percent did in 1965.

Spending on information technology in higher education is likely to decline overall nationally, but spending is still over \$5 billion annually.

Unlike other technology spending, wireless access is on the rise across the country.

- The overall wireless market is likely to go over \$200-billion in the next three years. 2004 again saw double-digit growth in wireless communications technology in the US.

Source: Society for College & University Planning-Quarterly Report, 3/05 www.scup.org

Tidbit

(Internal Office Communications)

Gym Floors

This may seem elementary but a reminder might not hurt. When you are replacing an existing gym (or Multi) wood floor with a new wood floor verify the existing depressed slab depth and compare it to the depth of the new wood floor system. One of our current projects has an existing 1 ¾" depression but a 2 ½" wood floor section. It makes for awkward threshold transitions. Fortunately the wood floor sub has had this happen to him a few times before and he will "transition" the floor thickness at the doorways so that a flat threshold will work within accessible compliance requirements.

Tidbit

(Internal Office Communications)

Keys

As you may be aware, local Fire Departments (and sometimes police departments) require that a key to the building(s) be located at a specific exterior location near the entry. The building key is located in a secure box accessible with a universal key that only fire and police have access to (accessible mounting height?). These boxes, commonly referred to as Knox Boxes, are manufactured as both recessed and surface mounted models. Obviously, recessed boxes are the most secure from vandalism. If you need to use a surface mounted box, there are provisions for wiring the box to the building alarm system which will offer some protection if it is vandalized (some jurisdictions are actually requiring an alarmed box whether it is surface or recessed mounted.)



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Winter of Discontent

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The good news is that there are several variables in the “bidding game” that can be controlled by the owner. Not the least of these variables is bid timing. **When** a project goes to bid can dramatically affect the cost of a project.

The graph below illustrates the average number of projects being bid on a monthly basis as reported by the Sacramento Builder’s Exchange as well as the relative cost of construction in the Sacramento area for the same period. What is immediately apparent from this chart is that the annual rise in construction costs follows the annual rise in the number of projects being bid by approximately 3 months.

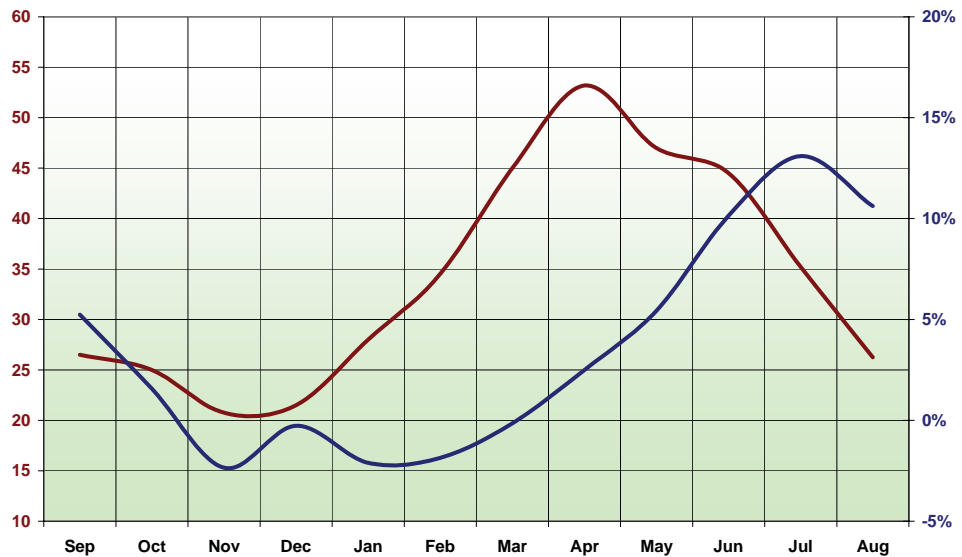
While the exact reasons for this rise may be questionable (if not debatable), it seems reasonable to conclude that with each month of bidding, the remaining pool of contractors available to bid on and accept new work decreases. Furthermore, as contractors fill up their books for the year, they may be inclined to look for projects with higher profit margins. Whatever the cause, it is interesting to note that the rise and fall in bid price is not concurrent with the rise and fall in the number of projects being

bid. Instead, the bid price fluctuation lags behind by two to three months. We might, therefore, surmise that it is not the number of projects being bid, but some condition or circumstance resulting from the level of bidding that is subsequently causing this seasonal rise in construction costs.

In any case, we can safely conclude that getting a project to bid in November, January or February can reduce the probable construction cost by as much as 10-15% versus bidding the same project in July or August. Conversely, if a project cannot go to bid between October and April, we can expect the project to cost upwards of 10-15% more. (History would also suggest that the “tighter” the bid climate, the more pronounced the seasonal variations...)

Obviously, funding restrictions, design schedules, and facility needs will to some extent dictate when projects can be made available for bidding. However, choosing the bid/construction schedule with awareness of these seasonal trends can hopefully lead to some savings as well as a more reasonable expectation of the final bid results. While our efforts may not always lead to a “glorious summer,” they may at least save us from the fate of standing alone on the battlefield crying, “A bid, a bid, my kingdom for a bid!” □

Number of Projects Going to Bid (Red) vs. Bid Results in the Sacramento Area (Blue)



Did you know ?

- 1) The California Community College system of two-year public institutions, composed of 109 colleges statewide organized into 72 districts, serves more than 2.5 million students and represents the largest system of higher education in the world.
- 2) California State University-related expenditures create \$13.6 billion in economic activity, support 207,000 jobs and generate \$760 million in state taxes.
- 3) UC Merced is the first new University of California campus since 1965 and the first ever in California’s sprawling San Joaquin Valley. The grand opening was this September with an inaugural class of 1,000 students. □