

showing more diversity than the company's current employee population. For the past two years, nearly half of the company's recruiting class has been comprised of women and minorities. Recently, Turner was recognized by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission for best practices in diversity.

"Our success is based on our commitment to develop a culture within our company that embraces diversity where employees can contribute creative ideas, seek challenges and assume leadership roles while continuing to focus on meeting and exceeding business and personal objectives," says Stu Robinson, Turner's executive vice president. "We have brought on board many employees who were formerly interns and mentees."

Because construction management programs are a prime resource for construction firms, colleges and universities continue to emphasize the importance of diverse enrollment.

"We actively recruit minorities, females

**Diversity in education promotes positive learning outcomes and better prepares students for an increasingly diverse workforce.**

and international students by traveling to conferences, high schools and community colleges," says Dr. Carla Jackson Bell, director of multicultural affairs for the College of Architecture, Design and Construction at Auburn University (AU) in Alabama.

She notes that diversity in education promotes positive learning outcomes and better prepares students for an increasingly diverse workforce.

Beginning this summer, AU's new construction camp, the Academic Success Action Program, will provide three weeks of mentoring for minority high

school students. The students, selected from high schools in Alabama, Tennessee and Georgia, will spend two weeks on the AU campus brushing up on their calculus, physics and AutoCAD skills, and one week in a specialized architecture, design or construction track. They also will work as interns at area construction firms.

AU boasts several graduate success stories, including minorities and women who now work for large firms such as Brasfield & Gorrie and Hardin Construction Company.

However, colleges and universities still have room for improvement.

Of the 576 students in AU's College of Architecture, Design and Construction, only 1 percent are minorities. Intensive outreach efforts are essential.

"The construction industry as a whole needs to actively educate school guidance counselors and parents about the diverse opportunities available in our industry," says Wayne Sheppard, assistant professor

## Developing a Precise, Professional Diversity Guide

When it comes to a diversity self-evaluation, construction firms often don't know where to start. In response, Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) began an overhaul of its existing workforce diversity manual and will release a concise "how-to" evaluation guide within the next year.

"ABC's Diversity Committee feels strongly that we need to help the rank-and-file member companies by providing a resource they can use to incorporate diversity in their companies' workforce development practices," says Tim Steigerwald, vice president of Messer Construction, Indianapolis.

As an active committee member, Steigerwald is helping create a theme and find a design firm to publish the professional-level document, targeted at smaller general and specialty contracting firms. Messer Construction has increased its spending on MWBE contracts from 2 percent to 12 percent under Steigerwald's leadership of the company's economic inclusion efforts.

"Our companies need to be able to adapt to the changing subcontractor community, and also the workforce they're going to hire based on the diverse makeup of communities today," he says.

"In addition, owners are demanding that high-quality projects incorporate diversity, and in a competitive environment, it's so important to have this component in your firm."

The new manual will emphasize supplier diversity, employee orientation and skill sets, building databases to track hiring and improvement, forming association partnerships, leveraging lower-tier spending and using peer resources.

"The success for us has been that we're not only dealing with grassroots contractors that need a chance to break into the industry, but also those that are already established and looking to grow into healthy, long-term companies," Steigerwald says.

Construction firms looking to boost their diversity efforts should keep an eye out for the release of ABC's new best practices manual in 2009.

—Lauren Pinch



The Jenkins Agency, Arlington, Texas, is the administrator of the owner-controlled insurance program required for all contractors working on the \$1 billion stadium project.