

Women in Construction Week: Q&A

Sylvia Wolfe, P.E., Fay – Estimator

Q: Where did you go to school and what was your major?

A: *My undergraduate major was Construction Management and I graduated from Carnegie Mellon University with a Master's Degree in Civil Engineering.*

Q: How long have you worked in the industry?

A: *6 Years and 2 months*

Q: What was your first position in the industry and what do you do today?

A: *I've been working at Fay, Shikun & Binui (S&B) USA Construction since Jan 2015. I started my career as a Project Engineer on the US 219 Garrett Bridges project in Somerset, PA. I worked with Ryan Surrena and Michelle Olszewski during those first two years and they literally taught me everything in heavy highway construction! Michelle, as a Project Manager, has been a great role model for me ever since. Simply by observing how she thrived in the field gave me a lot of guidance and confidence in the industry. Since 2017, I have been doing cost estimating in pre-construction. I really enjoy working with my colleagues Kurt Karanovich, Paul Hartley, and Ryan Wagner. Construction is all about teamwork and collaboration, and we always solve problems together. I've been learning so much from them and they push me to become better every day. As a Professional Engineer, I enjoy the uniqueness and challenges of each project.*

Q: What do you enjoy most about the industry?

A: *Of course, CAWP events! My supervisor, Kurt Karanovich, introduced the CAWP estimating competition to me in 2017 and I eagerly got involved. This is already the fifth year that I have coached and facilitated University of Pittsburgh teams. Two championships and more to come!*

Q: Why do you think this is a great industry for women to consider when looking at career paths?

A: *Women are generally thorough, caring and detailed-oriented, which meet a lot of the requirements for project management and estimating positions. Being in the construction industry, it is always exciting to tell others, "I worked on this project," or "we bid that project." Being part of the construction industry has made me more resilient and confident as a woman.*

Q: What would you do if you DIDN'T work in construction?

A: *That's a great question! I would probably be an accountant, since my dad studied accounting before he became a sales manager.*

Q: What are you up to when you are not at work?

A: *Cooking, hanging out with my pets, watching Netflix, and traveling (Prior to COVID times and hopefully soon again)*

Last but not least, I would like to mention the CAWP CLC Mentorship Program. Mentorship is what I personally benefit most from and would like to share with others. Katie Spear, Vice President of Marketing at S&B USA Construction, has been my mentor since 2019. She has given me so much advice and support, professionally and personally. As the only female in the executive team of the organization, Katie has been a role model for many like myself. Through the years of coaching University of Pittsburgh teams, I noticed a lot of struggles from current college students balancing schoolwork and extracurricular activities, pursuing internships and full-time positions, and connecting

themselves to the industry in general. I was very proud to help CAWP initiated the program as I can see how it could serve as a bridge between the students and professionals in construction industry.