

Fellows' Perspective: 50 Years of Construction Management and Project Delivery Development

Part 8 – How CMAA Chapters Invest in the Next Generation of CMs

Written by: CMAA College of Fellows Communications Committee

In our [Fellows Perspective series](#), we have examined the evolution of project delivery methods and the development of CMAA over the past five decades, including the establishment of the first 10 chapters. This final edition of the history of chapters examines how these 10 chapters engaged and supported students.

CMAA CHAPTER SCHOLARSHIPS AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Across regions and generations, common threads bind this heritage together. Scholarships opened doors. Faculty champions sustained continuity. Internships, site visits, competitions, and mentorship turned curiosity into commitment. Simplified applications and discounted access lowered barriers. Structured foundations, liaison roles, and workforce initiatives ensured that engagement would outlast any single leader.

[How did your chapter plan and carry out your annual awards event to raise scholarship funds?](#)

During its formative years, CMAA Chapters nationwide encountered a common obstacle: high aspirations with modest resources. Within the South Atlantic Chapter, Roy Beeson and Stacey Chapman confronted sustainability issues of their own. Although the initial awards program struggled financially, their strategic planning and prudent budgeting transformed it into a key fundraising event that consistently funded scholarships each year.

In New York, Jerry Loftus served as the inaugural chair of the Metro NY/NJ Chapter's Annual Awards Banquet, setting a precedent that would be emulated by subsequent chapters. His effective leadership established a protocol where former presidents assumed responsibility for chairing future events, promoting both continuity and institutional pride. Over time, the banquets evolved into distinguished gatherings at notable venues, during which industry professionals were recognized and students awarded scholarships, thereby advancing CMAA's mission.

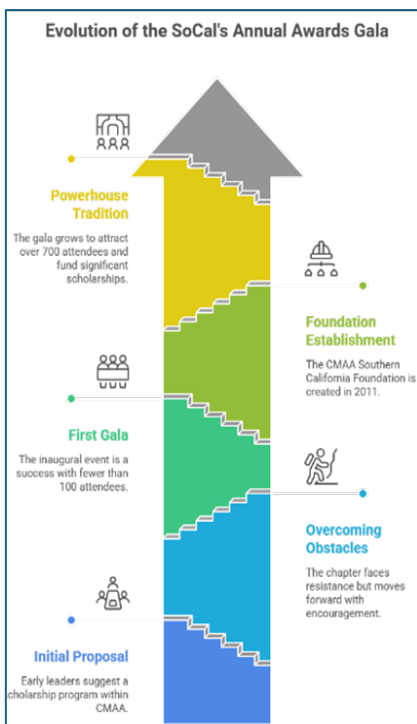
In New England, Mark Hasso, Head of the Construction Management Department at Wentworth Institute of Technology and a chapter board member, facilitated growth by organizing events on campus. His collaboration enabled the chapter to expand while minimizing financial challenges, providing cost-effective venues and opportunities for direct engagement with students interested in pursuing careers in the field.

In the southern region, Joe McAtee and Michael Griffin oversaw the Mid-Atlantic Chapter's consistent expansion. Under their leadership, monthly meetings transitioned into prominent annual events: a joint golf outing and scholarship dinner, which ultimately evolved into two marquis events. Through their initiatives, they effectively integrated budgetary considerations with a broader mission – honoring professional achievement and supporting aspiring construction managers.

On the opposite side of the country in Northern California, a new generation of leaders – Kenneth Harms, Agnes Weber,

Robert Flory, and Teri Cruz – took the idea of a scholarship dinner and transformed it into a cornerstone event. Under Flory’s presidency, the chapter revamped its sponsorship structure, introduced networking-focused fundraisers, and grew scholarship funding from modest beginnings to a robust, sustainable program. Cruz later refined this model further, leading initiatives like the Past Presidents Golf Tournament, seasonal networking events, and roundtable discussions with public owners – all designed to deepen engagement while expanding fundraising capacity.

And in Southern California, a defining story unfolded. When early leaders proposed a scholarship program in the 1990s, they were told it couldn’t be done within CMAA’s structure. But with encouragement from Association Chair Chuck Kleunker, the chapter moved forward under the guidance of a small, determined volunteer committee. The first Annual Awards Gala, attended by fewer than 100 people, including Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, was a resounding success. From that modest beginning grew a powerhouse tradition: an event that now draws more than 700 attendees, supports student chapters, and funds over \$100,000 in scholarships annually through the CMAA Southern California Foundation, established in 2011.



In Chicago, initial leaders openly acknowledged that their finances were “barely comfortable” and emphasized the need for strict discipline before introducing activities such as golf

tournaments or scholarship initiatives. It was not until after those tough early years that they started establishing traditions which would support the chapter well into the future.

By the time Northern Texas and San Antonio introduced their own awards galas and golf tournaments, the pattern had become clear. Across every region, what began as tentative steps toward financial stability evolved into deeply rooted traditions of celebration, mentorship, and giving back. The names and places varied – Loftus in New York, McAtee and Griffin in the Mid-Atlantic, Hasso in New England, Flory and Cruz in Northern California, Beeson and Chapman in the South Atlantic, and Kleunker in Southern California – but the spirit was the same. Together, they built not just events, but enduring legacies that continue to shape the profession and invest in its future.

How has the chapter engaged with students and are there lessons to be learned?

Over the decades, the story of student engagement within CMAA has never been accidental. It has been shaped by conviction, persistence, and the quiet determination of leaders who understood that the future of the profession was sitting in today’s classrooms.

Nowhere was this evolution more visible than in Southern California. Transformation took root when leaders acknowledged a hard truth: scholarships alone do not create connection. The chapter’s Foundation, the Annual Fall Hiring Fair (later the California CM Rising Conference), CMIT Mixers, faculty board representation, and the CMx workforce development initiative reshaped engagement from transactional to transformational. Scholarship applications tripled. Students became interns, then members, then committee volunteers and board leaders. The pipeline was no longer theoretical – it was visible, active, and making a positive difference!

Joe McAtee and Michael Griffin of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter proved that engagement does not always require elaborate strategy. Sometimes it begins with hospitality – five to 10 students at a table, a shared meal, a conversation about the craft and calling of construction management. What started as simple outreach became proof that students respond when invited into professional community.

Metro NY/NJ Chapter partnered with the Pratt Institute, NYU, Columbia University, NYIT, and NJIT to reveal another truth – students do not engage by accident. Students engage when someone takes the initiative and builds the bridge. The lesson was clear: designate a liaison, cultivate relationships, encourage students to participate, and give them both access and opportunities to network with professionals.

In Northern California, leaders such as Agnes Weber, Robert Flory, Carla Collins, and Teri Cruz extended engagement across a broad constellation of institutions – CSU East Bay, CSU Fresno, CSU Sacramento, CSU Chico, San José State University, UC Davis, Stanford University, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, and City College of San Francisco. They recognized that each campus required its own champion, its own rhythm, its own sustained attention. By 2025, the creation of a Student Liaison Board position formalized what had long been understood: students deserve not just outreach, but representation.


The South Atlantic Chapter, under leaders such as Roy Beeson and Stacey Chapman, demonstrated that sustainability requires structure. The establishment of a Foundation – supported by owner leadership and disciplined funding – created a durable engine for scholarships and student programs. What had once been episodic became enduring.

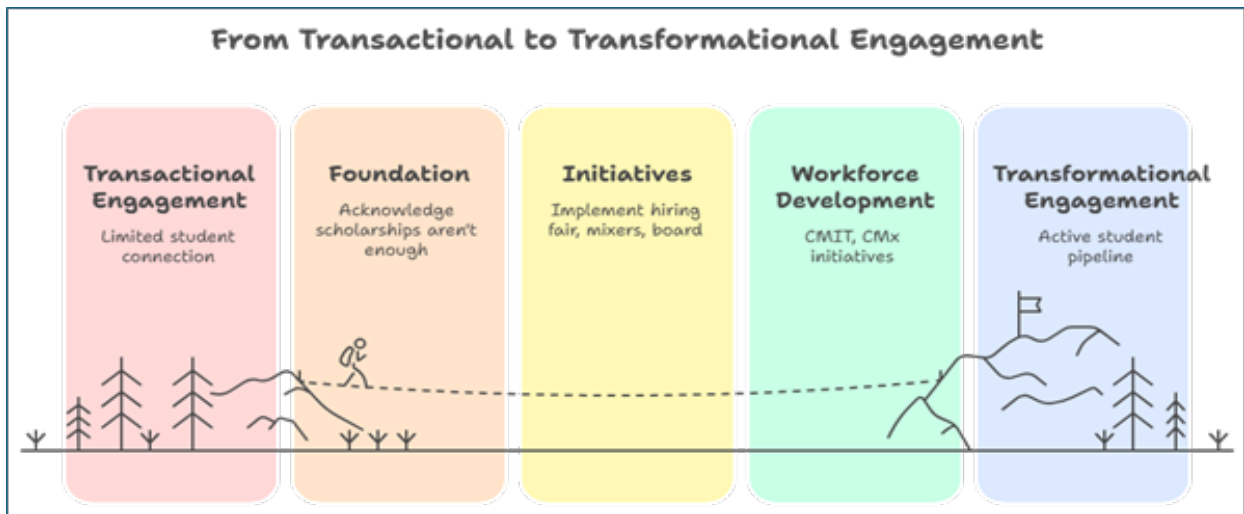
The National Capital Chapter discovered the enduring power of a faculty champion. Students graduate; professors remain. Sustained engagement depended on those academic partners who could carry the torch from one cohort to the next. This insight echoed in New England where collaboration with WIT and Northeastern University deepened ties between academia and industry.

Dr. David Ardit stood as a steady voice on the Chicago Board, reminding colleagues that students were not peripheral to the association’s mission – they were its future members. In the early years, resources were scarce, and aspiration often exceeded capacity. Yet Jan Turner’s forceful advocacy transformed belief into action, launching a scholarship program that signaled something larger: CMAA would invest in its next generation.

In Northern Texas, the formation of a Young Leaders Division created continuity between student chapters and emerging professionals. In San Antonio, collaboration with Texas A&M University and The University of Texas at San Antonio brought mentorship, internships, and structured hands-on experience to the forefront – affirming that classroom knowledge must be paired with real-world exposure.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Across regions, the pattern is unmistakable: chapters thrive when they have a clear vision, a small but committed leadership core, strong owner engagement, financial discipline, and a clear succession plan. Additionally, chapter leaders firmly believe that investing in students is not an auxiliary program – it is a generational responsibility. Through perseverance, partnership, and innovation, chapters have built more than strong programs and thriving organizations. They have built a living bridge from colleague to colleague, practitioner to owner, and classroom to career, ensuring that the profession remains strong, relevant, and innovative to provide value to all stakeholders. 





About the Article

The [CMAA College of Fellows Perspective Series](#), written by the Fellows Communications Committee, will share posts on the development of various project delivery systems over the years and how CMAA emerged and developed in response to changes in construction delivery. The Fellows hope this exploration of the past offers an understanding of the present and may even provide insights into what comes next.

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