

# CAREERS OF THE FUTURE

SPRING/SUMMER 2021

 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Construction Administration



- WHO ARE COMPANIES HIRING?
- WHERE'S THE BEST TALENT GOING?
- HOW SHOULD YOU CHART YOUR CAREER?

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# About

## Columbia University’s Master of Science in Construction Administration

Cities and towns are experiencing an unprecedented level of transformation. As the country continues to reopen, so are its jobsites. The New York metro area alone is currently constructing some of the largest and most advanced commercial, housing and infrastructure projects in the nation. There has never been a greater need—or opportunity—for versatile and well-trained professionals in the field of construction management.



Columbia’s #1 ranked Master of Science in Construction Administration prepares construction professionals and those in related fields to tackle, lead and shape our built environment. Graduates develop rewarding careers with some of the world’s most respected architecture, engineering and construction firms, entrusted with delivering some of the most impactful projects of our time.

Our programs include full-time and part-time schedules designed to meet students entering the industry or professionals who want to refine and add new skillsets all within the landscape of an advanced graduate degree program. The opportunity exists to design specific course sequences and cooperative internship experiences to complement a student’s professional goals and immediate needs.



# Plan The Next Chapter Of Your Career



**John B. Parkinson**

Lecturer

Construction Administration  
Columbia University, SPS

As New York City continues to reopen from the COVID-19 pandemic, recent graduates and mid-tier professionals are wondering what's next – for the industry and their careers? Columbia University has taken a deep dive into the lingering questions that employees and employers have about how firms will continue to build competitive teams, as projects come back online and people return to offices across the city.

We assembled a two-part panel to take on this important topic and answer several key questions that recent graduates and their future employers have - who are companies hiring? Where is the best talent going? How can you chart your career path? Through the panel discussion and this briefing paper, you will hear directly from owners and contractors alike. Listen to them as they share their thoughts on the skills and the experiences which they are seeking, as they are involved in some of those complex and recognizable projects from airports to roads and bridges, office buildings to health services and medical facilities. They represent the near term future of construction. They represent opportunity for you!



# Meet Our Industry Experts

## Moderator

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**La-Verna Fountain**

Lecturer; President and Founder  
Meaningful Communications Matter  
Construction Administration Columbia University, SPS

## Human Resources Professionals

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**Courtney Cannata**

Vice President, Senior HR Director  
Gilbane Building Company



**Christopher Musto**

Director of Human Resources  
Holt Construction

## Corporate Operations Professionals

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**Denise Berger, FAIA**

Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer  
AECOM, Americas East Region



**Michael Burnett, DBIA**

Senior Vice President  
Holder Construction



**Martin Durney**

Principal and Regional Manager  
Burns & McDonnell Aviation  
& Federal Group



**Gregory Huang**

Vice President  
CCR-USA



**Mark Leininger**

Northeast Market Leader  
AV Air Pros



# Industry Insights From Top HR Professionals

We gathered the construction industry's leading human resource professionals for an engaging and candid conversation about the future careers in construction. Who are companies hiring? What makes a candidate competitive? How are these companies retaining top

talent? The knowledge gained during this session will help students and mid-tier professionals create a roadmap, connecting them with the thoughtful insights of industry leaders from the private and public sectors.

## CAREERS OF THE FUTURE

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23, 2021 | 12:00 P.M. – 1:00 P.M. | VIA ZOOM

### KEYNOTE REMARKS

**JOHN B. PARKINSON**  
Lecturer, Construction Administration  
Columbia University, SPS

### MODERATOR

**LA-VERNA FOUNTAIN**  
Lecturer; President and Founder, Meaningful Communications Matter  
Columbia University, SPS

### PANELISTS

**COURTNEY CANNATA**  
Vice President, Senior HR Director  
Gilbane Building Company

**CHRISTOPHER MUSTO**  
Director of Human Resources  
Holt Construction

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[Click here to watch this panel discussion](#)

# Hiring Trends



**Focusing on the right market sector is critical because a lot of people don't recognize the diversity of the opportunities in the construction field. Once you can attract them to that, they really do see that there are many different avenues to go within a firm, such as yours, said Fountain.**



## The Job Market Is Back

### The Pandemic Pause is Over!

As New York reopens past the pandemic, the industry has shifted back to an employee market. Our group of human resources professionals notes that their projects are back online, and they are hiring the industry's leading talent. "The pandemic pause is over – and we are anticipating a busy, competitive fall campus recruiting season," said Courtney Cannata, Vice President and Senior HR Director of Gilbane Building Company. "There's an incredibly talented group of individuals that we're evaluating and looking to bring into our organization," she concluded.

## Focus On The Right Market Sector

### Careers in Life Science and Aviation are Expanding

Focusing on the right market sector is critical "because a lot of people don't recognize the diversity of the opportunities in the construction field. Once you can attract them to that, they really do see that there are many different avenues to go within a firm, such as yours," said La-Verna Fountain. When it comes to careers of the future, our panel of experts recommend looking for an opportunity based on the growing market sectors. "Our life sciences and aviation market sectors have heated up over the last couple of months," said Christopher Musto. "We are actively recruiting in all the states that we operate in for Project Managers and Senior Project Managers."

## Find Your Competitive Edge

### Showcase Your Leadership Skills At All Levels

According to our human resources professionals, leadership is key. For recent graduates looking to showcase their experience, Cannata recommends looking toward other areas. "Your leadership skills are not just limited to what your construction management resume looks like," she stated. "We are looking for qualities that are essential in a fundamental project manager, so that's direct and indirect leadership. That could take many different approaches – you could be involved in clubs, sports or your church, anything that shows you're active in your community is really important to us."



## Sharpen Your Presentation Skills

### And Highlight Them During Your Interview

As the “gatekeepers” of your next exciting opportunity, our human resources professionals want to see a candidate’s ability to present themselves in a confident, organized and practical manner. “The first step at Holt is a phone call, and I’m looking to see how the candidate communicates their experience, skills and what type of opportunity they are looking for,” Musto said. “It’s their chance to showcase their ability to present their capabilities and how they would connect with a fellow work colleague, client or subcontractor,” he concluded.

## Are You A Team Player?

### And Additional Corporate Values

In the hiring process, the industry’s top human resources professionals are asking, where have you leveraged teamwork to produce a successful result? Cannata also says the same is true for other core values like entrepreneurship. She adds, “I would recommend looking at companies’ websites, particularly their career site. What are these organization’s values? Do you align with those values? This will enable you to ensure that you make better decisions about whether or not you would like to pursue this opportunity.”

# Retaining And Growing Talent

## Focus On The Long Game


### Provide Long-term Stability and Growth

When asked about retaining the construction industry’s leading growth and talent, Musto stated “One of the key aspects that differentiates Holt is we truly hire for the career, and not for a specific project. Right now, we are growing our team, not only because we have projects coming up through the pipeline, but because we are thinking of the long-term pool of talent.” The long-term stability and opportunities for growth have been a long-term strategy for the firm, resulting in employees staying for most of their careers.


## Innovative Recruitment Methods

### Look Past Traditional Methods

Gilbane is using innovative recruitment methods to recruit new and diverse talent. Cannata noted, “We continue to look at additional ways to recruit, instead of just traditional four-year university degree programs,” she stated. “We are engaging more in community colleges, we’re engaging more through trade schools, as well as some fantastic national programs that we’re able to interact with, such as the National Society of Black Engineers, the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers and more.”



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# What Corporate Operations Want You To Know

Our panel of corporate operations professionals are at the forefront of the construction industry and the careers that support it. From industry growth, to changing markets and where the talent is going – this engaging discussion spoke about careers of the future – from a macro perspective. Whether you are a graduating student, or a mid-tier professional looking to make an impactful career change, this discussion provided you with invaluable insights for your career roadmap.



[Click here to watch this panel discussion](#)

## | Industry Growth

### The Opportunities Are Back Online

As the Industry Recovers, Careers Follow

The infrastructure industry is back online, and our panelists are seeing this reflected in the numbers. “TSA reported that, on average, there is about 80 percent recovery from loss – and that’s a very positive sign,” said Michael Burnett, DBIA, Senior Vice President of Holder Construction. “From that recovery we are seeing more opportunities that were shelved during the pandemic.”

Greg Huang, Vice President of CCR Airports, noted that airports are continuing with their capital programs, and passenger traffic is up. “Now that the vaccines are out, we’re seeing a recovery in domestic travel, actually a faster recovery than most industry experts expected,” Huang stated. “Globally, international traffic is down but we’re bullish on getting back to pre-pandemic levels.”



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### Special Focus On Aviation

Design and Construction Jobs Move Forward

Panelists also noted that in an industry that is always changing, the needs for flexible design and construction professionals are always significant. “There are constant opportunities in aviation,” said Mark Leininger, Northeast Market Leader of AV Air Pros. “Even if there’s a shift in aircraft type, where airlines travel, how they’re handling passengers, there are projects that are either online, or about to come online and with that brings a lot of career opportunities,” he concluded.





# | Careers Of The Future

## Digital Transformation And Innovation

■ Emerging Markets Are Creating New Careers

The COVID-19 pandemic transformed the ways in which the construction industry uses technology, and from that change came new and exciting career opportunities. “Over the last 18 months, digital transformation and innovation have really skyrocketed,” said Denise Berger, Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer at AECOM, Americas East Region. “At AECOM, we are seeing a digital transformation in many emerging markets. From Artificial Intelligence (AI), to robotics, engineering and data science, there are exciting careers in the pipeline.

We are also seeing careers in civil and mechanical engineering, for architects, as well as in data science and technology and innovation.”

## Demand For Cargo Creates Opportunities

■ Careers in Aviation are Evolving

While the demand for passenger travel during the COVID-19 pandemic decreased, there was an increased need for more sophisticated cargo solutions. “What we saw throughout the pandemic was that, in the airport sector, the air cargo traffic was resilient,” said Huang. “There’s definitely a need for additional infrastructure capacity at the airport, so at CCR, we are working on a number of development deals with major gateway airports, where we definitely see a lot of opportunities.”



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# Advice On Navigating Your Own Career Path

## | Be Fearless

### Hone into Your Confidence

“Be fearless,” said Leininger. “If you are fearless and you are smart about how you use that confidence, you will make the right decisions for yourself that are based on what you want for your future vs. the fear of failing. Also find a great person to bounce your ideas off of, someone that can give you sound advice.”

## | Make Yourself Relevant

### To Keep Up with The Industry

“If you’re self-motivated, if you have that energy and curiosity, the sky’s the limit on what you can do,” said Durney. “Also – because we work in an industry that changes so fast, make sure to stay relevant. Whether it’s continuing your education, or staying updated with industry groups, make sure you’re keeping your finger on the pulse of your professional community.”

“If you’re self-motivated, if you have that energy and curiosity, the sky’s the limit on what you can do, said Durney.

## | Find Your Passion

### Fulfillment Will Lead You to a Successful Career

“If your feet hit the floor every day and you are excited to do what you do, you will have a successful and fulfilling career,” said Burnett. “Lean into the career choices that will give you long-term satisfaction, that is how you will continue to stay passionate about what you do. I also recommend specializing in something – that gives you added value as a team member!”



**Be fearless, said Leininger. If you are fearless and you are smart about how you use that confidence, you will make the right decisions for yourself that are based on what you want for your future vs. the fear of failing. Also find a great person to bounce your ideas off of, someone that can give you sound advice.**







## | Lean Into Your Authenticity

### That's Your Competitive Edge

"I have interviewed a lot of potential candidates in my time, and the most impressive professionals I meet are the people who know who they are and recognize what their competitive edge is," said Berger. "I also encourage you to be your own advocate, because that will be very important during your career!"

## | Be Curious

### And Explore Your Options

"It's important to have curiosity, intellectual curiosity," said Huang. "Pick an industry and a firm that fits your values, and your career growth goals. This might take some experimentation – so get out there and network to learn more about the organizations that are hiring, and how they can fit into your life goals."





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**CONSTRUCTION  
DIVERSITY INITIATIVE**

Diversity Research, Policy and Training for the Building Industries

### **About Construction Diversity Initiative (CDI)**

CDI is an inter-disciplinary research, policy and training initiative within Columbia University to produce, deploy and transfer knowledge around minority, women, veteran, workforce and related diversity stakeholders in the building industries.

**DIVERSITY/AGENDA**  
It's *more* than you know.

### **About Diversity Agenda**

Diversity Agenda is a digital and print platform that creates meaningful conversations on the importance of diversity and inclusion across every industry. Diversity Agenda's research and outreach programs build on industry data, innovative technology and cutting-edge agendas on best practices for diversity and inclusion in the public and private sectors. Our mission is to create content that creates change and progress to achieve equality for all.