

# Women in construction management: charting a path forward

By DARLENE SEPTELKA and LINGZI WU  
University of Washington

As the industry celebrates Women in Construction Week, it's a great time for us to reflect on the progress that has been made to date and look ahead to what needs to be done to continue advancing the representation and participation of women in our industry.



Septelka

## STATUS OF WOMEN DIVERSITY IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) for 2022, women can cheer since they currently have 1.29 million construction jobs, up 3.65% from 2021. This could seem positive at first glance — more women are employed in the construction sector. Yet the most important question that needs to be answered is: While the overall number is growing, is the traditionally male-dominated industry embracing more diversity? The BLS data for a 20-year period was then examined, and we discovered that the overall gain was only 1.28% since 2003, and only 10.9% of construction workers were women in 2022. If we continue on our current course, we wouldn't reach 2 women to 10 men until 2055.



Wu

## IS THERE A PAY DISPARITY?

When reviewing the 2022 yearly median weekly earnings for the construction sector, we compared the women median pay to the median pay for men and found the pay disparity was 16%, but when compared to 2021 the disparity had decreased by 4%, thus trending in the right direction.

## WHERE ARE WOMEN WORKING?

Let's go one step further and break out the construction sector into occupation categories to examine what type of work women are performing in the BLS construction sector. Out of the total women employed in the construction

sector the percentage per occupation category is as follows: 11% for executive, financial and business operations occupation; 14% for professional occupations; 12% for sales occupations; 57% for office occupations; 3% for field construction occupations; and 3% for other service such as transportation/maintenance occupations. So, most women in the construction sector are employed in office jobs with the least working in the field.

But what is the overall diversity for each occupation category in the construction sector? Let's take a look at three: executive, financial, and business operations occupations is 16%; professional occupations is 21%; and field construction occupations is 4.18%. Thus the management and professional occupations are more diverse than those working in the field construction occupations.

When we examined the three occupation categories over a 10-year period the diversity of the workforce gained by 128% in the executive, financial and business operations occupations, 188% in the professional occupations, and 175% in field construction occupations. The overall construction sector gain for all job categories was 120%. If we predict the diversity growth over the next decade, based on the diversity growth over the last decade, we would predict that in 2033 women would represent 20% in executive, financial and business operations occupations, 40% in the professional occupations, and 7% in field construction occupations.

## WOMEN ARE MAKING GAINS IN PROFESSIONAL OCCUPATIONS

The potential gain from enhanced diversity is greatest in the professional construction occupations, which includes construction managers. Construction managers' employment is expected to increase 8% between 2021 and 2031, faster than the average for all occupations, according to the 2021 BLS Occupation Outlook Handbook. The BLS also reported about 41,500 openings for construction managers each year, on average, over the decade. Many of those openings are expected to result from the need to replace workers who transfer to different occupations or exit the labor force, such as retirement, which will create additional employment opportunities for women.

Nationwide, there are a total of 478,500 male and female workers employed as construction man-

gers, of which 10,490 are employed in Washington state, with a mean annual wage of \$116,800 in Seattle. With the expected employment growth, women in our region can enjoy excellent employment and salary opportunities as construction managers.

## ARE UNIVERSITIES PROVIDING A PIPELINE OF WOMEN?

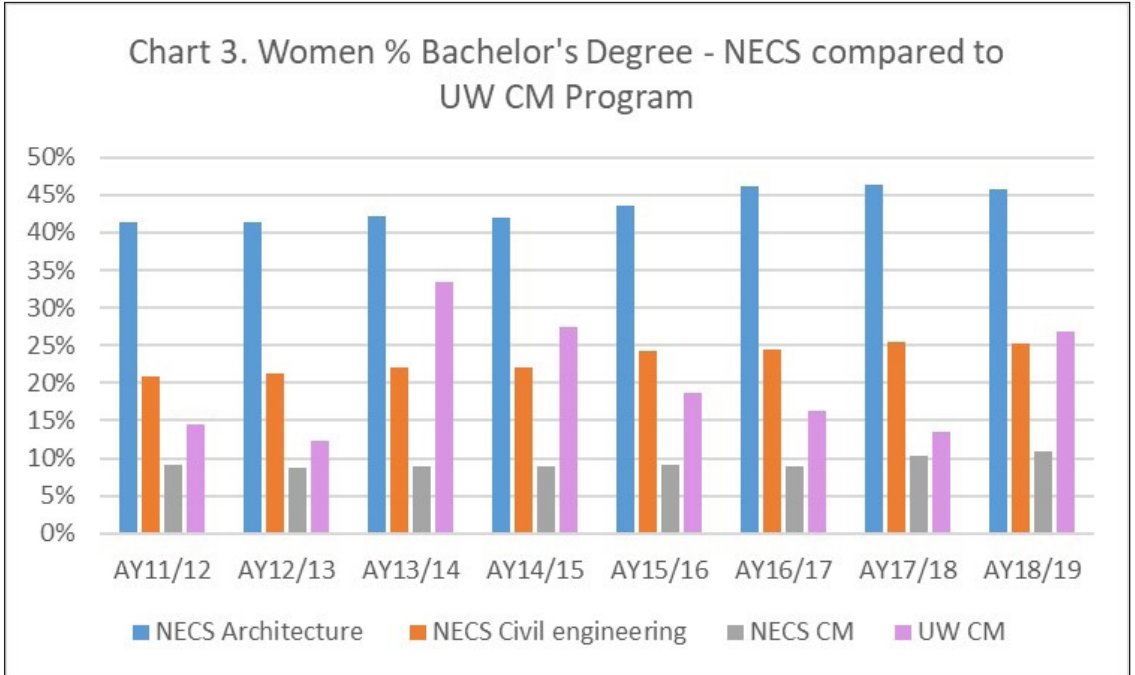
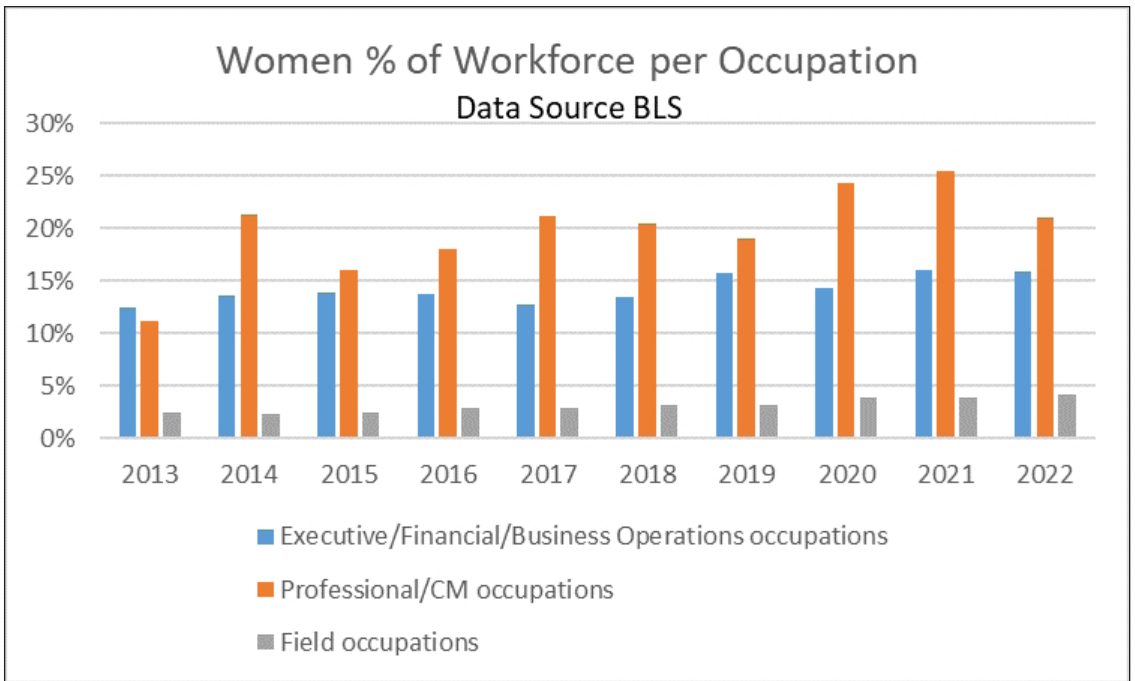
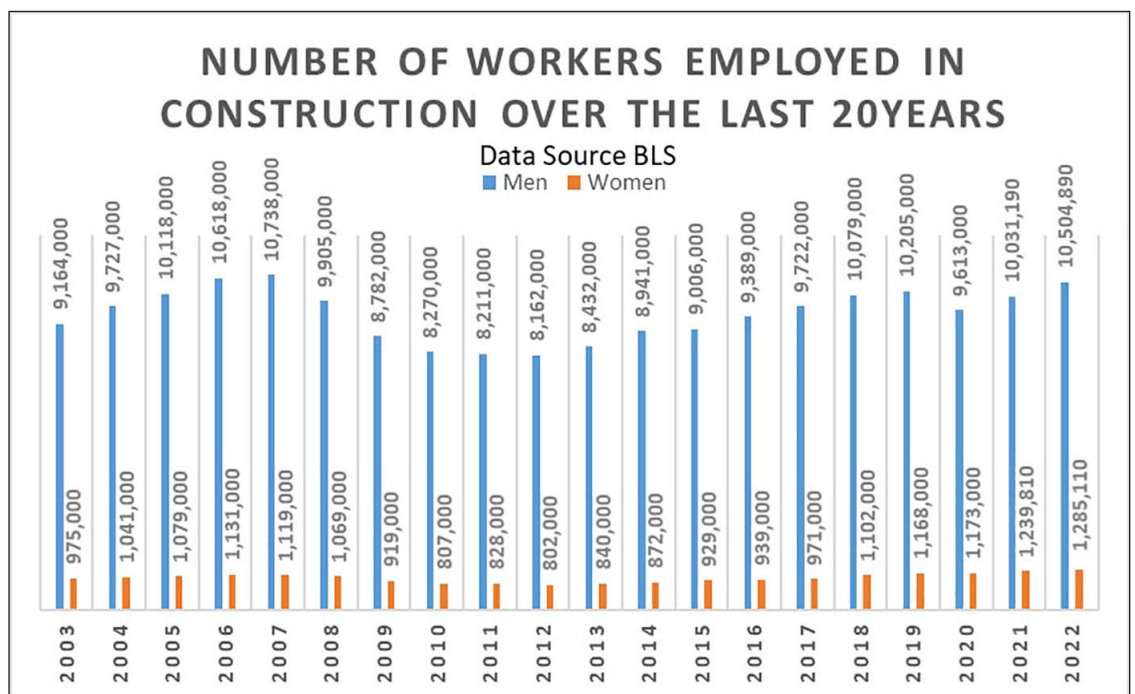
According to the BLS Handbook, construction managers normally require a bachelor's degree. Nationally, there are now 123 approved programs offering bachelor's degrees in construction management (CM) or construction engineering (CE). The Associated Schools of Construction and the two accreditation bodies ACCE and ABET do not compile or publish diversity data. Women made up just 9% of students enrolled in construction degree programs, according to the author's research for her previous DJC article in 1999.

The National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) most recent report on degrees awarded for the academic year 2018/19 indicated that women made up 11% of bachelor's degrees conferred in construction management or construction engineering — only a 1.1% overall increase since NCES started tracking CM degrees for the academic year 2011/12.

When compared to other programs within the built environment schools, the ratio of female students graduated from CM program is significantly lower. For example, the graduated women in civil engineering programs was 21%, while that of architecture programs was 41%. This shows that more needs to be done to encourage high school students to choose a career in construction management and to introduce freshmen to our CM programs before they declare a major.

Yet, the NCES data indicates that the master's programs in CM are more diverse compared with the undergraduate programs — the female student ratio was 23% in academic year 2018/19. This suggests that more women are either entering the construction industry after completing undergraduate degrees in other disciplines or are working toward career development to senior management positions in the construction industry. Our analysis of the BLS data reveals that there will be plenty

See FORWARD — page 6



## Local NAWIC chapter holds events this week

By JOURNAL STAFF

The Puget Sound Chapter of the National Association for Women in Construction is marking the 25th Annual Women in Construction Week with five events planned over five days.

This year's theme of "Many Paths, One Mission" celebrates the different journeys women take to achieve the same goal: strengthening and amplifying the success of women in the industry. Proceeds from this week's events will benefit Camp BuildHER, a two-day summer camp that will introduce 7th to 10th grade girls to the construction industry.

The chapter kicked off the anniversary year on Sunday with a beautification project at Jackson Park Trail in Seattle. A volunteer team of chapter members joined Green Seattle Partnership to help maintain the forested parkland adjacent to Jackson Park Golf Course.

Today, the chapter is holding a virtual panel discussion covering "hot topics" with leading women in construction. The panel includes: Michelle Couste, superintendent at Clark Construction; Kabri Lehrman-Schmid, project superintendent at Hensel Phelps; Lauren Nunnally, chief administrative officer and senior vice president at Swinerton Construction; Tamaka Thornton, community and citizenship director at Turner Construction; and Jonelle Tufts, business development manager at Turner Construction. The panel moderator is Jane Mounsey, human resources director at GLY Construction.

The panel will be live 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m. and is free. Registration is at <https://tinyurl.com/NAWIC-panel>.

On Tuesday, a breakfast meeting will feature a presentation on the WNBA Seattle Storm training facility project. Speakers will include Maria Barrientos, managing partner of Barrientos Ryan; Sarah Carlson, senior project manager at Sellen Construction; and Kristin Ryan, partner at Barrientos Ryan. The moderator will be Angela White, marketing and public relations manager at Holmberg Mechanical.

Tuesday's event will be held at the AGC Building, with tickets at \$45 for members and \$55 for others. Registration is at <https://tinyurl.com/NAWIC-Storm>.

A second virtual panel presentation, 2-3 p.m. on Wednesday, will cover recovery, reuse, reclaim and recycle of construction materials. This panel will consist of Jenna Burchell, community relations specialist at DTG Recycle; Stephanie Gowing, sustainability director at Absher Construction; and Laura Soma, sustainability manager at GLY Construction. The moderator will be Jennine Zari, construction sales at Waste Management. A \$15 donation is requested and registration is at <https://tinyurl.com/NAWIC-Reuse>.

The week will wrap up with a wine tasting and networking event on Thursday at Northwest Cellars in Kirkland. It will be held 5-7 p.m. and costs \$50 for members and \$60 for others. Registration is at <https://tinyurl.com/NAWIC-Wine>.

If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair - Shirley Chisholm



## IN COST & PROJECT MANAGEMENT



[WWW.DCW.COST.COM](http://WWW.DCW.COST.COM)





# Women: The secret ingredient for taking the local construction industry to the next level

By LISA POOLE  
LinkMe



Poole

The Puget Sound region's construction industry — in many ways on the forefront when it comes to innovation — is missing out on an opportunity to lead the country when it comes to promoting women in leadership roles. The elements of success are in place: We have one of the largest chapters of the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) in the U.S.; the Washington State Department of Transportation has made diversity in contracting an explicit goal; and construction hiring managers across the region are

being measured on their ability to recruit women. Despite this foundation, the number of women in construction leadership are still not what they should be to make Puget Sound a nationwide leader.

Here's how our industry can fill the gender gap so that five years from now, when we celebrate our 30th Women in Construction Week, industry and government leaders around the country will want to be part of our success.

## MAKE CONSTRUCTION ASPIRATIONAL

Currently, recruitment is too focused on the transactional and not enough on the aspirational. What does this mean? It means we need to go beyond programs that only increase applicant volume. We simply aren't doing enough to normalize the idea of women leading in a male-dominated field. The entire construction brand

is caked in a history of maleness; it's going to take a concerted effort to market our industry to the girls, young women, and students who are making decisions about long-term careers.

We need media representation that goes beyond women doing remodel flips. Let's tell the story of women planning and managing large commercial projects. Stories that show how the kind of strategic and collaborative skills women bring to fields like law, finance, and medicine also make them excellent leaders in large-scale and complex construction projects. In short, we need to invest in making construction not only a normal job for girls and women, but an exciting and lucrative career path.

## EXPAND STEM TO INCLUDE CONSTRUCTION TRADES

The science community has done a great job of building cam-

paigns and programs that invite girls and young women to dream big about a career in STEM. Until now, our industry has been completely left out of this equation, and this is a missed opportunity. Locally, companies are investing in making sure that girls who love math and science think high tech is their first, best, and only option. Our industry has the opportunity to expand that narrative so those girls can dream about standing on a massive jobsite as a gleaming office building goes up, an affordable housing project gets delivered to the community, or a new light rail line is put into service.

How many career coaches and college job counselors are encouraging young women to imagine using their people and operational skills to manage a jobsite, rather than a retail or hospitality team? Often, women bring a unique set of skills that

help round out the capabilities of their team. Firms can benefit from the creativity, problem-solving ability, time management, and unique perspectives of a more diverse team.

STEM comes in all shapes and sizes. Workers who have an understanding of how things come together, who have spatial intelligence and are great kinesthetic learners, come in all genders and can lend their skills to a wide variety of fields. High schools and colleges need the tools and programs — provided by industry — that paint a vivid picture of how all genders who love to work with their hands can express that in fields beyond arts and culinary.

## COMPANIES: BUILD THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE

Transformative change doesn't happen magically. Just like con-

struction, amazing things are built through deliberate process. In our industry that often means men need to be at the vanguard of this transformation — encouraging growth, mentoring, and rethinking the workplace for all genders.

Companies can support professional growth by providing financial and managerial support for staff to participate in groups like NAWIC and CREW (Commercial Real Estate Women of Seattle). The companies can pay for memberships, allow time to attend events, and ask staff to share what they learn with the wider team.

Companies can also formalize mentorship programs that give females confidence to go after opportunities. Research shows that women are less likely to

See NEXT LEVEL — page 6

## Meet the women at Skanska building a more inclusive culture

■ Skanska Women's Network empowers women throughout the construction industry.

By JESSICA CHRISTOPHER  
Skanska USA

"Passionate," "bold" and "inspired." That's how Lacey Maki, Laura Halady and Dayna Dealy each describe their work at Skanska when asked to choose one word. Between 4:30 a.m. alarms, chauffeuring kids to school and sports, 5-mile runs, jobsite visits, leadership meetings and multiple cups of coffee, each of these senior leaders not only plays a pivotal role in building and developing iconic projects throughout the Seattle region, but also in developing and building a more gender-inclusive environment within the entire construction industry.



Christopher

Today, as the industry continues to grow in size and complexity, we are seeing an emphasis on diverse teams and skills. This requires hiring, training, advancing and supporting women across all jobs, levels and aspects of construction.

In their respective leadership roles across Skanska's Building, Civil and Commercial Development business units, Lacey, Laura and Dayna are responsible for leading the development and construction of multi-million-dollar commercial and residential high-rise towers and multi-faceted transit extensions, as well as a stewarding technology and system advancements, sustainability initiatives, employee advocacy, and company growth.

They not only help set the strategic course for some of the Puget Sound's biggest projects, but they also are all members of the Skanska Women's Network (SWN), an employee resource group focused on mentoring, developing and retaining women at Skanska and attracting women into the industry. SWN works to promote a gender-inclusive culture and to advocate for more understanding, opportunity, and growth industry-wide.

Heading into Women in Construction Week, I sat down with Lacey, Laura and Dayna to discuss the joys and challenges of the job, SWN, their vision for the future of inclusion in construction, and more.

**Q: Tell us about your role at Skanska.**

**Lacey (Skanska USA Building):** As vice president of operations, I'm responsible for commercial management of our projects, staffing, placement, recruiting, employee advocacy, technology and systems.

**Laura (Skanska USA Civil):** My official title is project controls manager, but on a big project like the Sound Transit's L300 Lynnwood Link Extension, I'm responsible for things like DBE and labor compliance, management of office staff, and overseeing the various aspects and costs of the project itself.

**Dayna (Skanska USA Commercial Development):** I'm vice president of development, and am currently leading Skanska's development of Kaye, a 30-sto-

ry multifamily apartment tower with ground-level retail in downtown Seattle.

**Q: What projects are you most excited about?**

**Lacey:** So many. Completion of the upgrades at T-Mobile Park for the 2023 MLB All-Star Game. We also have many elementary and middle school projects underway, which excites me since I have two school-age boys. And, of course, there's The Eight, our amazing Class A-plus office tower in Bellevue, which we're building in partnership with our Commercial Development colleagues.

**Laura:** My work on L300 excites me most, as this project is multifaceted with bridges, rail, highway, parking garages, and other structures. My role and the diverse nature of the project allows me to touch so many things to make the project successful.

**Dayna:** I'm most excited about the development of Kaye. I've been working on it for the last five years from its conceptual stage. It's my baby! It's a historical site that will support Seattle's Belltown neighborhood by providing more housing and jobs in a beautiful area. I'm also inspired by innovation and sustainability. Technology is catching up to the ideas for improving climate change. The rate of change is exponential compared to five-10 years ago.

**Q: Are there other team members or groups of women you've worked with, and what type of impact has that had on the success of projects?**

**Lacey:** I'm particularly proud of the UW Waterproofing project, because this was a pursuit that I lead, and most of my team members are also women. I spoke with a couple different women who were inspired to enter our business after they saw our team of mostly women win this project. That was really gratifying.

**Q: How does Skanska help empower women and build the bridge to advance women in construction?**

**Laura:** Empowering women is a big thing for Ryan Clayton and the L300 leadership team. Our managers are supportive and transparent, as well as very intentional about starting the conversation. In my role, I work closely with Sound Transit and labor groups to ensure that we are empowering all our women from craft workers to suppliers to small business partners.

**Lacey:** As with any company trying to navigate change in a traditionally male-dominated

industry there are challenges, and Skanska recognizes that we need to look like our community and clients, which are much closer to a 50/50 gender balance than the construction industry. Skanska actively looks for opportunities for women to take leadership positions, allowing a culture to grow where women can succeed, including a focus on inclusion.

**Q: What is your role in SWN and what inspired you to join?**

**Dayna:** I'm the co-vice chair of SWN. I was inspired to join after seeing the many passionate people involved who were trying to make positive changes in gender equality. Additionally, the programs show me a pathway to progress. There's bias everywhere and SWN has taken a practical approach to help people self-advocate and understand the differences.

**Lacey:** My career has been a long journey of fighting for respect and equal treatment and I finally saw a place for allyship with strength in numbers to help drive improvement and change.

See INCLUSIVE — page 6

### Why Join Us?

Women in construction join NAWIC for many reasons. For some it's to be part of a network of like-minded women facing the challenges and the opportunities of a career in the construction industry. For others it's chance to learn more about technical or leadership skills.

NAWIC membership helps you grow and flourish, personally and professionally.

### Benefits of Membership:

- Annual Mentorship Program
- Career/Job Leads
- Webinars, Seminars, & Speakers (Local, Regional, & National Levels)
- Leadership Development
- Committee Opportunities
- Community Outreach Opportunities
- Access to Local, Regional, and National resource networks
- Local & National Newsletters
- Lasting connections with other strong, empowered women in the industry!

Join Us!

## coming together to build stronger, safer communities

*"As a real estate development firm, it is important that we continue to support the growing need of affordable housing in the communities that surround us, to ensure that not only the people who occupy our buildings, but those who support them, can live and work within a reasonable distance.*

*By partnering with organizations like Habitat for Humanity, we are making homeownership possible for families in need, and that is a truly wonderful gift that carries beyond the structural walls of a house."*

— Linda Hoffner, RPA®, Senior Property Manager, Wright Runstad & Company

Seattle—King & Kittitas Counties

## Join us!

[habitatskc.org/women-build](https://habitatskc.org/women-build)



# BNB

BNBuilders

## BNB PROUDLY CELEBRATES WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION WEEK



BNB women exemplify the best qualities we seek to promote: diversity, empowerment, inclusion, and integrity. Our team members are truly shaping the future of construction.

COMMUNITY

KNOWLEDGE

DIVERSITY

SAFETY

INNOVATION

SUSTAINABILITY



#WOMENINCONSTRUCTION



# Breaking barriers: inspiring stories of women in construction

By **DARLENE SEPTELKA**  
University of Washington

National Women in Construction Week is celebrated on the first full week of March. The annual recognition of the 10.9% of women in the construction industry serves an important purpose: To celebrate and raise awareness of women's contributions to this male-dominated industry. The four women highlighted below represent a combined 81 years of experience and are eager to offer their advice as role models for the next generation of women who will join this incredible industry.



Septelka

**GARNETTE ROUSE**  
CONCRETE BIM/VDC  
MANAGER  
HOFFMAN STRUCTURES

*"It is not all about swinging hammers."*

#### Garnette's journey

Garnette has over 39 years of experience in the construction industry, and her passion for drawing started at a young age. Her father was a land surveyor, and he inspired her to pursue a career in drafting. She earned an associate's degree in architectural drafting at community college in Spokane, where she was one of only two women in her class.



#### Building a career

After graduating, she started her construction career as a rebar detailer and worked her way up the ladder by traveling across the country working in over 30 site trailers on different projects. Garnette attributes her success by building respect with the crafts and being open to learning from them. She built on her knowledge by working with the carpenters and asking them questions. "I learned everything I know from the construction workers," she said.

#### Current role

As a concrete BIM/VDC manager at Hoffman Structures, Garnette plays a crucial role in working closely with the field and overseeing a team of international structural detailers. She is involved in both domestic and international projects that are being built by Hoffman.

#### Women working in the field — building respect

When she started in the field, there were very few women. When asked if she felt like an outsider as a woman in the field, Garnette quickly responded, "No, I was just part of the crew." She built respect with the craftworkers and earned a reputation for being knowledgeable, reliable, and skilled.

#### Advice to women starting their career

Garnette advises women who are starting their careers in the construction industry to explore different opportunities, such as internships and apprenticeships, to help make informed career decisions. Additionally, she highlights the value of building strong relationships with colleagues and mentors who

can provide guidance and support along the way. She wishes that more women were interested in a career in BIM and VDC, as she believes it is a great career path for those who have a two-year technical degree. As a woman who has achieved great success with an associate's degree, she encourages women to explore various paths and careers within the industry.

**TARA HARRINGTON**  
ASSISTANT PROJECT MANAGER  
HOWARD S. WRIGHT, A  
BALFOUR BEATTY COMPANY

*"Women are a powerful and dynamic force in our industry."*

#### Tara's journey

Tara's journey into construction began in high school during an economics class where students were asked to choose a career. Tara had always enjoyed drawing houses and planning out different configurations with her sister and initially considered pursuing a career in architecture. After researching the skills and attributes needed for a career in project management, Tara discovered that it aligned perfectly with her interests. When applying to the University of Washington, she found that construction management was offered as a bachelor's degree and decided to pursue it. Tara earned her degree in 2014 and believes that she made a successful career choice based on her self-assessment in high school. Tara has been with Howard S. Wright since graduating.



#### Challenges in the industry

When discussing barriers, Tara said, "I've gotten a lot more comfortable over the years, and I feel like I can challenge any barriers with the support of my company and the community of folks that I work with." She noted that these challenges impact everyone differently and no matter your experience, it's important to acknowledge that there is still work to be done in creating more diversity and inclusivity in the industry. Tara also emphasized the importance of diverse perspectives in problem-solving and innovation in the industry. As each person has a unique view of the world, it's critical to have input from different individuals to find the best solutions. "Women are a powerful and dynamic force in our industry. Our contribution is vital in making decisions and solving problems because our perspectives are so different."

Tara also emphasized the importance of diverse perspectives in problem-solving and innovation in the industry. As each person has a unique view of the world, it's critical to have input from different individuals to find the best solutions. "Women are a powerful and dynamic force in our industry. Our contribution is vital in making decisions and solving problems because our perspectives are so different."

#### Industry slow to adapt — more flexibility needed

Tara discussed how the construction industry's approach to changing work environments has been rather traditional. She noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the industry became more innovative and flexible in adapting to new workplace strategies. However, after the pandemic, the industry was quick to return to old traditions and eager to get back to "normal." She urges the industry to continue to evolve workplace strategies by adapting to employees' needs, leveraging technology and focusing on individual productivity and value.

#### Belonging mentality

Tara believes that it is the little things, such as using gender-neutral language, which can make a big difference in cre-

ating a more welcoming environment for women. Tara said Howard S. Wright has created supportive "employee affinity groups" to promote further inclusivity in the workplace and industry. Tara felt that these groups, including the Connecting Women employee affinity group, have provided women a safe place to network and engage in career development discussions.

#### Advice to women starting their career

Tara has some valuable advice for young women who are considering a career in construction. First, she encourages them not to be afraid to jump in and try it out. Although the industry is ever evolving, women can succeed in a career in construction and make their mark in the vital infrastructure that builds our communities. Second, Tara recommends that young women challenge their peers and leaders. It is essential to have a voice in the industry. Don't be afraid to push the envelope, speak up, and challenge the status quo.

**KABRI LEHRMAN-SCHMID**  
PROJECT SUPERINTENDENT  
HENSEL PHELPS

*"As a superintendent, I value learning through face-to-face collaboration and problem solving. I love it."*

#### Kabri's journey

Kabri's passion for the construction industry began while studying for her bachelor's degree in civil engineering at Columbia University. With no background in construction to call on, she would ask many questions to the project managers and superintendents who stopped by the Starbucks where she worked across the street from the groundbreaking Time Warner Center project in New York City. One of these conversations helped her secure her first internship in the industry.



After graduation, she joined Hensel Phelps in a field engineer role, where she learned the value of asking questions and listening to the expert installers in the field. Over her 17 years with Hensel Phelps, Kabri has held positions in both field and office management. Her career is valued at \$1.9 billion work in place.

#### Women in field leadership

Kabri believes women can be successful in field leadership roles. One reason there are fewer women, she considers, is that many superintendents are sourced from successful careers in the skilled trades — where the percentage of women has not changed significantly. She notes that many contractors are now offering field leadership paths to construction management program graduates. "Both pathways are important to the future of our industry," she insists. Kabri often speaks to students of the opportunities and rewards of a superintendent career path for both women and men. As a mother, she understands the importance of being a role model for other women who are concerned about the logistics of working in the field with a family.

#### Challenges of a woman superintendent

Kabri acknowledges that as a woman superintendent without a craft back-

ground, gaining respect can take time. She believes that women often work extremely hard in the industry to continually prove their value, as a single misstep can set them back. "One of my daily focuses is to demonstrate my commitment to my crews' success. I never want them to question my motives, level of effort or appreciation for their work." She continued, "While much of my effort conveys the extraordinary service I want to deliver as a manager, I wonder if my energy could be more positively motivated."

Kabri has received many industry accolades for her work yet is accustomed to having her leadership approach challenged — some people have expressed concerns that it is too collaborative. She seeks to learn her crews' perspectives and drive to consensus. Her commitment to listening results in crews that are more effective and productive, not complacent, or stubborn. "When our teams are inclined towards communication and we're building a place where they feel invested each other's success, quality, innovation and safe behaviors follow," Kabri explains.

#### Advice to women starting their career

To the women joining the industry, Kabri highlighted the power they have to make an impact through every single interaction they have. The ability to remain curious and ask questions directly drives your success in learning from the incredible people performing work.

Kabri emphasized the industry's cultural value of "pride of work," adding that people are driven to teach and motivated to provide for their families and communities. "These values are our industry's strengths! They make this industry an extraordinary place to work." Everyone can tap into those strengths to build strong relationships that result in successful teams.

**KATIE TRIMPE**  
SPECIAL PROJECTS DIVISION  
MANAGER  
TURNER CONSTRUCTION CO.

*"Communicator. Translator. Generalist. This field keeps you on your toes every day."*

#### Katie's journey

Growing up, Katie's parents were both in the art world, so she had no family connection to the construction industry, but at a young age showed an interest in the built environment. After reading a 1997 DJC article about women in construction, which was by this author, her mom recognized this field as a potential fit and arranged job-shadows with an architect as well as a construction manager. After these meetings Katie was hooked and chose the University of Washington, specifically for the Construction Management program. During college she interned with Turner Construction, which turned into a full-time job after graduation. She has been with Turner for 17 years and has advanced through several positions and departments as she grew her career.



#### The benefits of women in construction

For Katie, the appeal of working in construction is the need for versatile and adaptive problem solving. The

need and ability to navigate the unique demands of each project, by serving as constant communicator, translator between stakeholders and trade partners, and a consultative generalist who can simply get the job done. She finds that this allows her to not only tackle the practical challenges of constructing a space but also gain insight into the values and needs of those who will be using it. As a result, all those involved in the project feel a sense of ownership and pride in the final result, making for a more collaborative process compared to traditional construction practices.

#### Leadership roles for women

Katie points out that more and more women are taking on leadership roles in the construction industry by the year; which is welcome progress. She finds both the trend and the deliberate commitment to diversity in leadership empowering, as it suggests a clearer path for women to reach true parity in corporate leadership roles in the future.

#### Mentors and career advocates

Katie emphasizes the importance of finding mentors and advocates early in one's career; to both navigate and accelerate the ladder. The wisdom, guidance, and support from this network can have huge impacts to both personal development and professional advancement. She points out that it's important to have diversity in mentors both in and outside of the your workplace. In working at Turner, however, Katie says she's been fortunate to have incredible support from both organized resource groups as well as individual mentors. As an example, Turner has a robust women's network that provides opportunities to form connections, mentorship and support.

#### Advice to women starting their career

Katie is excited about the growing number of women entering the construction industry. Even though it may seem intimidating at times to be a woman in construction, seek out and take advantage of the great support networks that exist within your company and the industry. She also suggests spending as much time in the field as possible. Approach each opportunity with a willingness to listen and learn from highly skilled tradespeople, superintendents, project team members, design professionals, and others with decades of valuable experience. Always be willing to ask questions, to listen with humility and respect, and to learn and grow.

#### CLOSING THOUGHTS

Women in Construction week is about bringing visibility and building community in the construction industry. A common thread that runs through each of these women's successful career stories is that they had someone in their lives who introduced the industry as an option. In return, they all emphasized the importance of mentorship and outreach to schools to help promote careers in construction. As role models, they demonstrate that women have a place in all corners of the industry.

The industry is changing and intent on welcoming a more inclusive and diverse workforce. Recognition of the achievements of women in construction is representative of the growing opportunities for all underrepresented groups.

*Darlene Septelka is a professional teaching fellow at the University of Washington. She has over 50 years of construction industry experience spanning the globe.*



SEATTLE  
BOISE  
PORTLAND  
EUGENE

**ANDERSEN IS PROUD  
TO SUPPORT OUR  
WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION**



**pacific  
earth works wbe**  
award winning landscape construction since 1979

100% woman owned, award-winning DBE/WBE landscape construction firm serving the Puget Sound area since 1979. Specializing in green roofs, parks, athletic fields, wetland & stream restoration, high-end residential & commercial landscape installations designed by the finest Landscape Architects in the Pacific Northwest. Proud to be a partner in the new Seattle Aquarium Ocean Pavilion.

*Celebrating*  
**44 YEARS**

[www.pacificearthworks.com](http://www.pacificearthworks.com)

WIC WEEK 2023



[WWW.ANDERSEN-CONST.COM](http://WWW.ANDERSEN-CONST.COM)



## Forward

*Continued from page 2*

of opportunities and room for advancement for women working as construction executives, further breaking the glass ceiling for women.

We cannot confirm whether the NCES data accurately reflects the current status of women in our CM programs nationwide without surveying specific schools and universities. We can confirm that the University of Washington's CM program is significantly better than the national average, with a women's ratio of 17% among all graduates in the bachelor's CM program and a ratio of 38% in the master's CM program in academic year 2021/22. Women make up 44% of the primary faculty in the UW's CM program, and 30% of the affiliates and instructors, which significantly contributes to a more diversified classroom, and establishes role models and mentors for the next generation.

### **MORE INCLUSIVE AND WELCOMING WORKPLACE**

In conclusion, while there may be a variety of causes for the inequality observed, we can all agree that bringing more women into the construction industry would be advantageous. In addition to introducing more diverse viewpoints and enhancing problem-solving and creative abilities, it would help alleviate the existing labor deficit on construction projects. If our growth predictions for construction managers are accurate, we must examine how to increase the diversity of students at our universities in order to satisfy business demands for a more inclusive and welcoming workplace.

*Darlene Septelka is an assistant teaching professor in the Department of Construction Management at the UW. Lingzi Wu is an assistant professor in the Department of Construction Management at the UW.*

## Inclusive

*Continued from page 3*

**Laura:** We are building a large coalition of women at the L300 project. I have a reputation of "if you are not sure where to go, go ask Laura." At first, I rolled my eyes, but quickly realized that this could help a lot of women find their voice and confidence.

**Q: What are some steps for making construction more inclusive to men and women?**

**Lacey:** Education, being vulnerable, being curious and feeling safe to ask questions and having empathy towards others.

**Q: Having seen the industry evolve, what do you hope for the next generation of women in construction?**

**Dayna:** I'm excited about the future because of the work SWN is doing here and nationwide, fostering relationships with organization like the Girl Scouts of Greater LA, and tech and community colleges for scholarships and recruiting. My development team is 66% women. I also hope future generations realize they deserve to speak up and should be confident. There is a career path that is not only linear — there are many ways to be involved in building buildings. Development, design, construction, engineering, safety, and on and on.

**Laura:** I have seen many changes for women in construction, but there is a long way to go. I want to continue to embolden women and given them the tools to ask the right questions while learning how to communicate the challenges we face. We have started raising awareness and letting men know that it is OK for them to join us. This isn't a "no boys allowed" mission.

**Lacey:** I hope the future/next generation of women see more women in the high-level leadership ranks. I want women to see people that are like them when they look up and they can see that they aren't the only ones, and that their career can go all the way to the top if they want it to.

*Jessica Christopher supports communications for Skanska USA.*

## Next level

*Continued from page 3*

pursue opportunities even when they're qualified, while men are more likely to apply even if they're not. Overcoming these obstacles is absolutely doable, but the mentorship programs have to be in place. And the male leaders who implement them need to feel that it reinforces their own ability to be a great boss to all genders; someone who knows how to mentor a winning team.

Workplace changes that are known to attract women, like flexible schedules, remote work, and even childcare, also appeal to a new generation of workers who are willing to work hard as long as they can put just as much dedication into their families. This broadens our ability to attract and retain the people who will lead this industry into the future.

A few Puget Sound construction and development firms are making these changes, but we have much more room to grow. Every day I see gaps and opportunities as I work with the incredible leaders building our vibrant region. We've got a great foundation in place. Nothing should be holding us back from being leaders in this space except our willingness to invest in the next generation. Because no one is better at building the future than the construction, architecture and engineering industries.

*Lisa Poole is the founder of LinkMe, a talent acquisition and growth consulting firm helping connect the architecture, engineering, and construction industries to what's next.*