

## Ace Article

### **SOLD OUT ACE Virginia Joint Owner Forum**

Another **SOLD OUT ACE Forum** took place at William Mary. Members came to hear and discuss the concepts and plans for future development from major higher education institutions on the eastern side of Virginia. The panel consisted of VCU, ODU, Hampton U, Norfolk State and W & M



*ACE is a joint venture of the American Institute of Architects, Associated General Contractors & American Council of Engineering Companies of VA, to educate and promote best practices of the design and construction industry.*

All of the higher education institutions stressed the importance of experience when it comes to a given project. They also all agreed on the importance of an excellent team that can check the BCOM box, as well as being engaged and excited about the project at hand. All of the institutions shared an interest for new projects and new ideas combined with quicker, smarter, and more economical ways of going about business.

When it came to SWAM, the institutions shared that they try to use every opportunity to spread work to smaller firms, but realize that not many opportunities of that nature become available. However, they did urge everyone in attendance to do their best to keep up with new opportunities to get the best chance at receiving work.

Each institution also gave a good look into the future, and laid out possibilities that are past the 6 year plan. ODU shared a necessity for a biology building. William & Mary plans to expand student population, so a lot of new facilities and infrastructure will come with that transition. The athletic department in general was also brought up, sharing the need for new practice facilities, and hopefully an aquatic center. Norfolk State sees both a science building and a fine arts building in their future. VCU advised people to be attentive to their blogposts and masterplan, but shared the idea of a neuroscience center on the horizon.

In terms of looking for work, and avoiding certain potholes in the process, the institutions enthusiastically invited people looking for work to come to the campus. Each institution was interested in learning more about the person up for the job, and all like the chance to meet with people, show them around, and ensure genuine interest is there. The panelists were open to appointments in limited time slots for most attendees, but they did say suppliers had to go through a different process since there are so many products they must consider

buying. Some common annoyances shared were a lack of knowledge about the institute, as well as long, complicated, and disorganized proposals.

Finally, the script was turned and allowed for the audience to share their thoughts. Robert Lee of English Construction, Chairman of AGCVA, stood up and stated the main thing they wanted from the owners of the higher institutions was openness, transparency, and consistency. He hopes to see more uniformity and a standard be put in place to allow for that desired transparency. The owners said they plan on meeting themselves later this summer and this was a great opportunity to hear from General and Specialty Contractors about what is working well and what needs improvement. After the discussion, all attendees had an opportunity to talk with each institution representative on an individual basis and discuss specifics on follow up questions.

Feedback from the event was positive with a request to hold a similar event with higher education on the western side of Virginia being planned for September of 2018.