ACEC continues to serve business interests of engineering firms in Indiana

Written by: Rick Olson, ACEC Indiana President 2019-20, Regional Manager at Earth Exploration

I am genuinely honored to serve as President of ACEC Indiana, especially given the great leadership that this organization has experienced over the years. I am also proud to represent the geotechnical community in this capacity. I see this as a testament to the diversity of ACEC firms and the necessity to act together as a team with one voice. We can accomplish more together than individually. When acting individually, discussions with our business partners can come across as complaints, but together our discussion creates an environment of a true partnership that creates wins for all stakeholders.

I would like to thank our Board members, and especially Shelby Swango, for their leadership during the past year. I truly understand the shoes that I need to fill including all the leaders that have carried the torch in the past and to continue to represent the engineering community in Indiana in a positive manner. Together we have had numerous accomplishments and have set the stage for future successes as well. Furthermore, I look forward to working with the current Board to keep the train heading in the right direction.

The successes we have had on legislative issues have been tremendous. Most notably these have included passing duty to defend legislation and making advances in water funding. This has been accomplished by partnering with our state legislators and helping to educate them on the need for fair contracts and much needed funding for our failing water infrastructure. Other issues have included defense of professional licensure and attempts by others to take important engineering decision-making out of the hands of experts. One of the ways that we show the concept of one voice is through our PAC contributions at the state and national levels as we have continued to meet our goals. Another factor that has contributed to the legislative successes is the Minuteman grant that we received recently from ACEC national to help fund lobbying efforts for the water funding legislation. Thank you to all the firms that have contributed to this fund as well as the PAC. I urge all members to continue the grass roots effort on these important legislative issues.

Even though we have had these successes, we cannot rest on our laurels. Because of the great business environment that our state has enjoyed as well as increased transportation funding, one of the biggest needs facing our industry is having an adequate workforce to complete the work. To address this issue, our board has created a Workforce Development Committee to further evaluate the current situation of need vs. ability of our in-state universities to meet that need. Other initiatives have included engaging a consulting firm, TMap, to reach out to folks having ties to Indiana that may be interested in coming back home as well as programs to reach out to high schools and universities.

Another initiative that we have been working on is involvement of our young engineers to continue to strengthen the reach of ACEC Indiana. This has been accomplished by developing forums and other activities for younger members as well as continuing to strengthen our Engineering Leadership program that has been such a great success.

In conclusion, I encourage all member firms to get involved with ACEC Indiana to the extent possible since you only get out of it what you put into it. These programs can only be maintained and strengthened through the volunteer efforts of our many members working closely with our excellent staff who continues to knock it out of the park. Participating in regional and national events has given me a true appreciation for the great business environment in the state of Indiana and the tireless work that Beth, Colleen and Shelby do. Thank you ladies! I am confident that ACEC Indiana will continue to thrive and serve the business interests of engineering firms in Indiana.