



## FIU Students Win Big at National Convention in Las Vegas

**MIAMI, Fla. (April 26, 2005)**—A team of four FIU construction management students won the Grand Champions Award at the 6th Annual Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) Student Chapters Construction Management Competition, held in March during the 2006 ABC National Convention in Las Vegas.



The FIU team (L to R: Faculty mentor Yimin Zhu, Paul Becks, Ted Gadoury, Tony Ferrer and Jason Lopez)

FIU students Paul Becks, Tony Ferrer, Ted Gadoury and Jason Lopez competed for more than \$10,000 in cash and prizes, as well as the coveted Grand Champions Award, against a record 23 other participating schools (including teams from schools

with top-tier construction programs, such as the University of Florida, Auburn University and Brigham Young University, among others).

FIU also won first place in estimating (in a tie with University of Washington) and second place in project management/scheduling. The Grand Champions Award goes to the team with the highest overall total points.

This was only the second time the university participated in the annual competition.

### Confidence and experience help set standard

Prior to arriving in Las Vegas, each participating team was asked to prepare a baseline estimate, a safety plan and a project management/scheduling plan for a conceptual project, including addressing owner requirements, based on minimal preliminary design information previously provided.

Once there, the teams worked on two alternate plans within a rigorous seven-hour

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period. The five finalists, after only a few hours of further preparation, competed the next day in a second round comprised of a verbal presentation and defense of their submission to a panel of judges who acted as owners, owner representatives and design professionals selecting a potential general contractor.

"We all know that FIU is a top-notch school that produces top-notch students," Becks added. "With this and future wins, construction management students from FIU will be very sought-after by employers."

The members of the FIU team, all seniors of the construction management program, were accompanied and advised by faculty mentor, Assistant Professor Yimin Zhu.

"Not to take anything away from the other students in the competition, but the thing that set our students apart was their confidence," Zhu said. "They have real world experience, an extra edge gained by their work with nationwide companies such as Bovis Lend Lease, Centex and Hensel Phelps."

### **Hard work 'key to win'**

Becks, Ferrer, Gadoury and Lopez had their work cut out for them, as they could only meet on Sundays to work on their proposal.

"The greatest challenge we faced was finding the time when four full-time students, who all work full-time, could meet to work on the pre-competition proposal," said team leader Ferrer.

"It was a competition that we all felt we had a significant advantage in and a real possibility of winning," added Gadoury. "It makes me proud for the university that we are the national champions."

"We won because of hard work and our knowledge of the industry," said Lopez. "The key to our win was that we all helped on every aspect of the project and worked efficiently."

All four agree this competition was an opportunity to raise FIU's profile at the national level.

"It's a huge recognition of how good the construction management program is," Lopez added. "And we got to go to Las Vegas."

A new team of



The FIU team working on proposal during Day 1 of the competition

construction management students will defend the title at next year's competition. Zhu will start selecting students in the fall, looking at their academic performance, work experience and level of commitment.

By Martin Haro

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