

# Site Visits: Seeing is Believing and Learning

Contributed by the editors of *AIArchitect*

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## SUMMARY

Site visits coupled with lessons learned can teach less experienced professionals critical project management skills that are difficult to gain in the office. Einhorn Yaffee Prescott incorporates site visits as teaching tools in each of its offices.

## SITE VISITS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Seeing the building you have worked on rise out of the ground and become a reality is one of the greatest rewards of our profession.

Experiencing construction through all phases firsthand is an invaluable learning experience, and all the Einhorn Yaffee Prescott offices have taken advantage of this opportunity through site visits at local projects.

The Boston office recently used the Science and Technology Building at Assumption College as a site visit destination. The project was incorporated into the office's "Lessons Learned" agenda with a tour sponsored by Tyson Curcio, giving participants the opportunity to walk the job site and discuss the building's structure and exterior detailing with respect to the new Massachusetts Energy Code.

Following a lessons learned discussion on lab casework, younger staff visited the Assumption College site and examined casework installation in progress. Seeing close up and in person the complex coordination issues that laboratory projects entail added a level of understanding that office discussions alone cannot.



Assumption College

## SITE VISITS FOR ALL PHASES

At the D.C. office Joan Stouffer, AIA, and her team developed a site visit series that spanned all phases of the construction of the Georgetown University Southwest Quad. Each visit had a special focus, including major mechanical systems, planning and fitting out a large residence hall, building a major food-service facility, site design and construction, and the particular issues associated with designing a residence for the Jesuit community.



Georgetown University

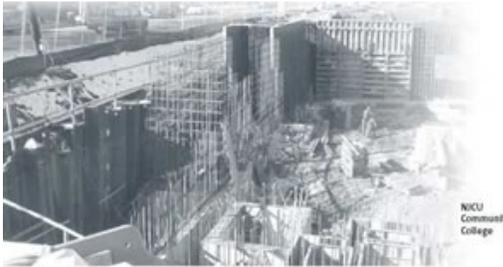
## CLOSE-UP ON CONSTRUCTION AND LOGISTICS

In Albany, N.Y., project architect Bob March led site visits to the College of Saint Rose's Lally School of Education and Lima Hall residence-hall renovation. He also assisted Michael Goard, Assoc. AIA, with field visits at the Palace Theatre renovation. The setting of stone veneer, pouring of footings and foundations, and structural-steel installation were among the construction activities featured. Judging from the interns' comments, they found great value in these visits, as they were able to understand better the complexities of construction and coordination. March is planning future field visits for the Campus Activities Center at the College of Saint Rose.

## VIRTUAL SITE VISITS

The New York City office conducted virtual site visits on three projects. Alan Willig, AIA, showed presentation drawings of St. John's University Dorm and Residence Hall, juxtaposed them with

photographs of the corresponding element after it was constructed, and explained why some design features were not implemented or were altered. Trevor Knight presented NJCU Community College through detailed composite slides merging photos, drawings, and text. He described various construction problems, solutions, and associated costs. Chris Gaylord presented a 10-minute video mini-documentary of seven months' construction progress at Montclair State University. These projects created so much interactive discussion that the Lessons Learned breakfast had to be continued during lunch.



**LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES APPRECIATED**

One thing that firm principals have learned from these sessions is how much the staff appreciates the opportunity to learn. Typical among the comments they see on program evaluation forms are

- “It provided significant information in dealing with construction administration and submittals”
- “EYP University has been one of the greatest assets in being employed at EYP.”

**ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR**

This article was based on a conversation with Cahal Stephens, president and CEO of Einhorn Yaffee Prescott, which is committed to continuing the education of its employees. Its firmwide learning program, EYP University, includes programs in seven curriculum areas.

**RESOURCES**

**More Best Practices**

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 03.02.04     Mentoring as a Team Sport
- 03.02.09     Firm Supports Protégés Through Inclusive Mentorship
- 07.05.04     Types of Training Programs

**For More Information on This Topic**

See also “Staff Development,” by Laurie Dreyer-Hadley and Kathleen C. Maurel, Assoc. AIA, *The Architect’s Handbook of Professional Practice*, 13th edition, Chapter 9, page 242.



See also the 14th edition of the *Handbook*, which can be ordered from the AIA Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by email at [bookstore@aia.org](mailto:bookstore@aia.org).



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**Keywords**

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- Personnel management
- Employment
- Professional development