

Architects, builders form local Lean Construction chapter

By **MONICA UNHOLD**
The Daily Transcript

In hopes of building a more efficient approach to managing construction projects, San Diego architects, builders, contractors and designers are coming together to form the Lean Construction Institute of Southern California.

The group held its first meeting Sept. 25 and the turnout far exceeded expectations, drawing nearly 60 industry professionals, said Steve

Sherrer of **BSD Builders, Inc.**

"This is proof that people are looking for a new method for construction delivery," Sherrer said.

BSD — along with **Childs Mascari Warner Architects** and the San Diego State Construction Engineering Management Department — are working together to found a local chapter of the Lean Construction Institute.

Lean Construction is an approach to project management allowing for a

quicker and more cohesive building process.

The philosophy requires that a heavily detailed plan for the execution of a project be incorporated into the project's architectural plans.

The plan must detail the amount of time each element involved in a project will require to complete. This includes just-in-time delivery of materials and continual comprehensive

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progress checks.

The owner, contractor and subcontractors are all tied together using an integrated form of agreement, which keeps all parties accountable to each other, Sherrer said.

Adherents of Lean Construction say the practice saves time and cuts costs between 10 and 40 percent.

Universal Health Services (NYSE: UHS) believes Lean practices will significantly cut its project costs, said Tim Riley, UHS regional project manager.

The company is implementing Lean Construction on all of its projects worth more than \$20 million.

Lean Construction increases efficiency by increasing communication, Riley said.

"Without Lean you usually have contractors and subcontractors just wanting to point fingers at each other," Riley said.

Riley attended the first Lean Construction Institute chapter meeting in San Diego and plans to be at the next meeting, he said.

Lean Construction has been gaining popularity since 2004 when Northern California-based **Sutter Health** became the largest company in the United States to adopt Lean principles, explained professor Colin Milberg who is spearheading SDSU's role in the new local Lean Construction chapter.

"Lean Construction is emerging as a

better way of completing and delivering projects," Milberg said.

Lean Construction Institute was founded as a nonprofit research organization in 1997.

The group is constantly searching for new ways of improving the building process by studying real projects.

Due to the strong research component of the organization, it typically partners with a university.

The Southern California chapter will be modeled after the Northern California chapter, in Berkeley.

The chapter partners with a student organization, Product Production Systems Laboratory at UC Berkeley, to involve students in researching better ways to implement Lean principles.

The Southern California chapter plans to partner with San Diego State, where a chapter of Product Production Systems Laboratory will be founded to get students involved in the process.

Milberg thinks the program is an excellent way for students to learn about Lean management.

"I really do see Lean Construction as the way projects will be done in the future," Milberg said.

Lean Construction Institute of Southern California's next meeting is scheduled for Nov. 20.

More information is available at leanconstruction.org.

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