

Crane gift grows BCS studio fund

By Walt Harrington
Mississippi State University

A gift from F.L. Crane & Sons, Inc., one of the nation's most extensive finishing contractors, now supports a studio fund to enhance student projects and activities specifically for the Building Construction Science (BCS) degree program at Mississippi State University. The annual support will help solidify the program and strengthen the student learning environment.

Fulton, Mississippi-based F.L. Crane & Sons, Inc. has a vested interest in the university's College of Architecture, Art, and Design (CAAD). The firm has long-standing ties to MSU and hires graduates for various jobs that require expertise gained through hands-on classroom experience.

The BCS program has been making inroads since its inception in 2007 as it turns out high-quality graduates well prepared for industry challenges. MSU alumnus Chip Crane, CEO of F.L. Crane & Sons, Inc., was among CAAD board members who initially advocated for the BCS program's addition.

"My father, Chip, was the first in our family to attend MSU, and he believed in tying architecture and construction management together to improve the working relationship between architects and builders in our industry," said Ty Crane, operations officer for F.L. Crane & Sons, Inc., who was among the BCS

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program's first graduates in 2011. "Dad hoped the program would allow architects to gain a better understanding of constructability and the issues that builders face, while giving future builders insight into the viewpoints of architects."

Ty Crane and Chip Crane are among the grandsons and sons of company founder Johnny Crane, a longtime friend and MSU supporter. Additional support from some family members extends to the Johnny Crane Professorship and a scholarship within the college.

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Within CAAD, BCS program director George Ford, a longtime educator and licensed professional engineer, believes the new support from F.L. Crane & Sons, Inc. will greatly assist the program. Some options for use of the annual fund, he believes, would be to support faculty development, along with support for student projects, activities, and lab materials.

"Professional development of



faculty is an important need for BCS professors to remain current with technology advances and market trends in the construction industry to better assist their students within the learning environment," said Ford. "We greatly appreciate the gift and look forward to utilizing proceeds for maximum potential."

With some 140 students, the program is one of only two studio-based programs of its kind in the nation. In the studio, students directly apply their classroom knowledge into various construction tasks. As part of the studio, students may be required to conduct team projects, complete building projects, and visit construction sites.

For more information on supporting the BCS program, contact P.K. Thomas, CAAD director of development at 662.325.2542 or email pkthomas@foundation.msstate.edu.