



Photo: PCI

Many Ways to Learn

William N. Nickas, *Editor-in-Chief*

I have a colleague who says, “In times of uncertainty, there’s opportunity.” Well, I seem to think that’s exactly where we find ourselves right now—with opportunity!

It was hard not to notice the lack of attendees at this year’s Transportation Research Board (TRB) annual meeting in Washington, D.C. The low turnout was understandable, given the COVID-19 pandemic and the virus’s ability to morph. Still, those of us at the meeting had focused discussions in several sessions that highlighted the need to develop a strategy and programs to advance the engineering skills and abilities of the existing and upcoming engineering workforce. We continue to look for ways to surmount the age-old challenge of remaining up to date with the current and evolving (future) engineering environment. Time constraints continue to challenge most everyone I chatted with, but most concur that this is a topic we need to advance. As you may recall, Gregg Freeby and I discussed the National Concrete Bridge Council’s areas of emphasis, which includes knowledge dissemination, in our Winter 2022 *ASPIRE*® editorial.

With the challenge of shaping our industry’s future fresh in my mind, I returned to my PCI office to renew

my focus on updating PCI’s *Bridge Design Manual* (BDM). The BDM is a living document, and, as such, it needs a bit of TLC from time to time. Our bridge community has changed in the last few years, and we now have a broader array of strategies to address in areas such as design and construction methods, inspection criteria, maintenance, and preservation (extension of service life).

The TRB meeting and the BDM updating process got me thinking about how our bridge community can positively affect the educational challenges of our existing and future workforce. I’ve been exposed over the years to several educational delivery methods. In the past, most of us attended conferences and went to sessions to discover the latest thinking. Then along came webinars with limited audience questions and answers. Like you, I am most familiar with self-study, eLearning, distance learning, and instructor-led training (ILT) programs. I define these programs as follows:

- Self-study—increasing one’s fundamental knowledge and proficiency through self-paced individual research and study.
- eLearning—computer-based educational programs with online interaction between the student and the preplanned experience.

On December 16, William Nickas gave the keynote speech at the Fall 2021 Sacramento State Precast Bridge Studio Finale at the Sacramento State Union after four integrated civil engineering and construction management student teams presented their design-build projects before a judging panel and other local and national bridge industry mentors and representatives. Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Eric Matsumoto.



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Cover

CDM Smith designed a 9-mile portion of Louisiana Highway One that uses a precast concrete two-lane elevated highway to provide reliable access to Port Fourchon, a major port on the Gulf of Mexico. The photo was taken shortly after completion and before the removal of existing moveable-span bridge.

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