Program Review
Executive Summary

Building Construction Technology:
Masonry Emphasis (MN), A.A.S.

Spring 2014
The art of masonry has been taught at Penn College since the early 1950s. When the institution was known as the Williamsport Technical Institute, masonry was included in the Carpentry and Building Construction Technology four-year program. Since then, masonry has been included in every carpentry trade program, certificate, and degree. The design of the masonry courses allows them to be easily incorporated into a variety of trade programs that Penn College offers.

The most recent course abstracts on record as of 2014 were revised in late Fall 2010. They were forwarded to and approved by Curriculum Committee in Spring 2011 for inclusion in the College Catalog in Fall 2011. No revisions have been made since that time.

Careers for brick masons, block masons, and stonemasons are expected to continue to increase in the current decade by 30% due to the construction of new schools, hospitals, apartment buildings, and other structures required for increased populations. Also stimulating demand for workers will be the need to build more energy-efficient industrial facilities and office buildings (some of which may require masonry construction) and to restore a growing number of old masonry buildings. The federal government has advocated for repairing schools and making government buildings more energy efficient, which should have a positive impact on the construction industry in general. The recovering economy is showing growth in residential construction, and this growth is expected to continue, further justifying the need for skilled masons.

Enrollment continues to be a challenge. Among the initiatives intended to increase enrollment is faculty involvement in K12 outreach programs, including Penn College Now, which is a growing dual enrollment program involving high school students throughout the region. In addition, graduating Building Construction Technology (CB) students are encouraged to re-enroll for an additional semester to attain a second degree in Building Construction Technology: Masonry Emphasis (MN), which has resulted in a sustained section of students for the past three years. In fact, this dual associate-degree strategy is being marketed as one of the College’s “Bright Ideas.” To further promote this combination and to increase its effectiveness, the program faculty are currently exploring sequence changes within the curriculum.

The program’s dedicated laboratory space, a 12,500 sq. foot facility built in 2012, provides adequate space to accommodate the current enrollment and potential increased enrollment. The facility enhances the learning and teaching opportunities for the students and the three full-time instructors. One full-time faculty member is retiring Spring 2014; the administration is evaluating the program’s future staffing needs.

The masonry department has a distinguished tradition of performing off-campus projects for the local community and on-campus projects for Penn College. These projects have resulted in community enhancement and monetary savings for the College, as well as hands-on experiences for the students. The size and scope of these projects provide opportunities for accomplishment that few other programs can claim.
The program is endorsed by the Pennsylvania Builders Association (PBA); while periodic review is underway, continued endorsement is expected, further distinguishing the program nationally.

Considering the professional and seasoned faculty, the modern facility, encouraging employment statistics, steady enrollment, and support from the current administration, the masonry program is poised to carry on into the next several decades, a rich tradition of masonry training and technical education.

Recommendations

- Enhance the students’ understanding of building construction from a carpentry perspective by adding Framing Principles as a required course. This course is currently offered as part of the Building Construction Technology (CB) major.
- Promote a second degree to those enrolled in the CB major. With one additional semester in select masonry courses, CB graduates could also graduate in the Masonry Emphasis (MN). The broader range of skills will result in greater employment opportunities.