



What is a Student Chapter?

The development of a Student Chapter provides an opportunity to bring students from a university or college, interested faculty, and mechanical contractors together in a formalized group to learn more about career opportunities and the benefits that are available through the mechanical contracting industry. Student Chapters assist to further a student's professional development.

Activities of the student chapter can include lunch discussions, community volunteer projects, lectures given by guest speakers, team projects such as competitions, social functions, and field trips to construction sites. MCA Canada and MCA America hold annual conferences for students allowing for collaboration between chapters.

Why Start a Student Chapter?

As a result of the changing demographics of our industry, there is a real and urgent need to attract the best and the brightest students into the profession of mechanical contracting. One of the proven methods to achieve this is by orientating students into our field so that they make "mechanical" their career choice.

Profile of a Student Chapter Member

Depending on the school and the programs that it offers, chapter members are generally students enrolled in a mechanical program whether as a technologist or an engineer. Others could be obtaining construction management degrees or diplomas. Many chapters also combine students from other faculties such as civil engineering.

The Benefits.....

The benefits to an association are substantial. In starting a student chapter the industry observes a clear and strong commitment from the association to build for the future by bringing together the four key industry elements; the association, the contractors, the learning institutions and the future industry leaders.

To a contractor, the benefits are considerable including an increased community image, a demonstrated commitment to the industry and the enviable position of working hand in hand with the best and brightest students headed towards the construction industry. This is an opportunity to positively influence the decisions of future leaders to move into the mechanical industry and more obviously, to hire them.

The benefits to an educator or learning institution include an increased profile within the institution itself, a progressive and first mover profile, as well as a recognized level of commitment to the industry. Also, it provides for high-level, practical interaction between the institution, the industry and the students. The institution also benefits by earning a reputation as an institution that is committed to its students in this area, thus attracting more potential students to build its program.

To a student, the benefits are significant. A student enjoys interaction with other students in a relaxed environment, they meet leaders in the mechanical contracting industry, they develop valuable community contacts and in the end have a tremendous opportunity for a successful career.



Accomplishments

- To date there have been several chapters developed in Ontario; McMaster University, the University of Waterloo University of Ottawa, Algonquin College, and the University of Toronto. Each year members of those chapters have convened annually at a Canadian Summit to broaden their knowledge on the mechanical contracting industry through visits to construction sites, training centres, or industrial plants. They have gone through the rigours of simulating bid proposals, have learned about technology used in construction, HR tips, all preparing them for a potential future in the mechanical contracting industry.
- Making History...MCA Hamilton/McMaster University students have finished in the top 10 of MCA America's (MCAA) Student Chapter Summit Competition for the last three years and won the competition in 2014.
- Participating contractors have been given the first opportunity to hire our industry's best and brightest. Contractors have hired summer and co-op students and have successfully made numerous offers of full time employment

Testimonials

Dr. Stephen Veldhuis – McMaster University

"As an educator one of my top priorities is to create unique learning opportunities for my students. The classical engineering program taught at most Canadian Universities focuses primarily on the fundamentals of engineering with only enough time in the schedule to cover the background material associated with advanced topics. Unfortunately there is only so much that can be taught in a class room setting and currently only limited resources are available to create meaningful labs and hands on projects. Thus it is important to partner up with organizations that can assist us with our education mandate. In addition to providing learning opportunities, the MCA student chapter has provided students with professional networking experiences which guide their career decisions. There are many rewarding careers in the area of mechanical contracting and we have found that over the years many of our students end up working in this field. Participation in the student chapter activities just makes them aware of these opportunities earlier and helps them prepare better for a professional career in this field. A key element of preparing students for a career in mechanical contracting is showing them what they can personally contribute to this industry and how the classroom knowledge they are learning applies to solve challenging problems in the real world. In addition to the engineering skills they learn in the classroom the student chapter also provides them with a way of building the softer skills associated with solving problems on their feet, collaborating and communicating ideas. The students also learn about the industry so they have more confidence when they talk with prospective employers. This helps students as they promote themselves to prospective employers and it helps employers integrate them in their work force when they are hired."

David Belluz, contractor, Bering Mechanical

"I think that it is very important to start a chapter to expose the new graduates to our industry. It gives them the opportunity to explore other sectors of the Engineering field. When I was in college I was introduced to the contracting sector thru our ASHREA student chapter. The owner of the company I started out with spoke at one of the ASHREA meeting I attended. It made us aware that there were a lot more areas to go into once we graduate other than with engineering firms. Our firm has recently hired a graduate from McMaster University this past year."

Thomas Czerniawski, University of Waterloo Alumni

"Of my time with the student chapter, one particular experience stands out. MCA-KW provided me with the extraordinary opportunity to organize and run a student conference. With the generous funding provided by our parent organization and a few industry partners, we were able to bring together a group of students for a weekend of industry related talks and hands on pipefitting. I've since graduated from the University of Waterloo and am currently pursuing a PhD; knowledge synthesis is central to my day-to-day. Experiences like organizing the MCA student conference improved my ability to orchestrate productive intellectual exchange, an ability that will serve me throughout my PhD and beyond. The student chapter brings together students and industry, prepares students to contribute meaningfully in the workplace, and is an important part of the engineering education ecosystem."

Andrew Easton, University of Waterloo Alumni

"My involvement in the executive team of the MCA-KW student chapter, at the University of Waterloo, has made a large impact on my professional career. MCA allowed me to build professional relationships with senior members of the mechanical construction sector, while giving me exposure to the rewarding careers to available to explore within the industry. Through this exposure I have found my passion for heavy industrial mechanical construction. I am currently a project coordinator overseeing mechanical piping with PCL Industrial Management Inc. executing one of the largest industrial construction projects in Canada, Suncor's Fort Hills Project - Secondary Extraction."

David Gowland, student, McMaster University Student

"Through being a member of the McMaster Student Chapter, I have been able to network with a lot of great people in the industry and at other student chapters. This has provided perspective on the various specializations within the industry, and the highlights of different career paths (project manager, site superintendent etc.). Additionally, the opportunity to participate in the MCAA Student Chapter Competition has provided a real world application of my education to a complex mechanical contracting project!"

Need Assistance in Starting a Chapter?

MCA Canada and the Construction Education Council are here to assist you! Dr. Stephen Veldhuis – McMaster University Associate Professor is valuable resource and available to all MCA's to help get your chapter up and running. For further information, please contact Tania Johnston at 613-232-5169 or by email tania@mcac.ca.

