

## State News for NSPE Members

### **Puerto Rico Universities Awarded Diversity STEM Grants**

The University of Puerto Rico at Aguadilla and the Universidad Ana G. Méndez, Gurabo Campus were awarded grants from a US Department of Education program focused on increasing the representation of underrepresented ethnic minorities in STEM fields. The University of PR–Aguadilla received \$232,570 and the Universidad Ana G. Méndez received \$226,669.

The grant is part of the [Minority Science and Engineering Improvement Program](#), which supports expanding the scientific and technological capacity of the US by providing resources to minority serving institutions.

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### **The Changing Face of Engineering Graduates**

New data from the National Science Foundation gives a picture of engineering's changing demographics over the decade ending in 2018. While the number of whites earning bachelor's degrees in engineering far outweighs the number of degree earners from all other race and ethnicity categories combined, some historically underrepresented groups are growing faster. The number of Latino engineering graduates, for example, grew 158% over the decade, and the number of women engineering graduates grew 113%.

[Download the infographic.](#)

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### **Client Selection Is More Important Than Ever**

*By Rich Friedman*  
(Friedman & Partners)

When the economy starts to look rocky and project opportunities may be diminishing, it can be tempting to start saying yes to work that's not a great fit (but

it's work) or chasing RFPs.

I saw a lot of this happening during the Global Financial Crisis (2008-2009), and I'm seeing it again now. In times of uncertainty, of course, we may be more willing to take on a project that is not ideal. But too often, firms start to convince themselves that throwing best practices out the window is their best option.

In this article, I discuss why that's not a good idea and offer some helpful guidelines for creating and implementing a thoughtful client selection process, one that strengthens your firm for the future.

[Read more.](#)

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## **Project Cancellations Sweeping the Nation as COVID-19 Intensifies Funding Shortfalls**

Billions of dollars' worth of transportation projects are being delayed or canceled across the country as state and local governments make spending cuts due to the coronavirus pandemic. A *For Construction Pros* article highlights findings from a recent American Road and Transportation Builder's Association report that points out that 14 states and 19 local authorities have delayed or canceled road, transit and airport projects worth \$8.58 billion.

[Read more.](#)

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## **At Virtual PECon, NTSB Chair Discusses Florida Bridge Collapse**

In a session on August 5, National Transportation Safety Board Chairman Robert Sumwalt III explained the role of the NTSB and the agency's investigation and [report](#) on the deadly pedestrian bridge collapse at Florida International University in Miami.



In March 2018, a pedestrian bridge under construction at FIU collapsed—claiming six lives. Despite evidence of severe cracking, the engineer of record insisted that the cracking did not pose a safety problem, according to the NTSB report. The university wanted to enhance pedestrian safety by constructing the bridge over a multilane highway that had been the scene of a pedestrian fatality. It would also serve as a unique gathering place for students, faculty, and university visitors.

“We all know that cracking in concrete is going to happen. That’s acceptable. But in

this case, we saw structural cracks that were 40 times larger than is typically acceptable,” Sumwalt stated. The bridge was designed using an “accelerated bridge construction” design method.

The NTSB identified three critical errors: 1) The bridge was under-designed. 2) The peer review was insufficient; and 3) There was a failure to close the bridge to traffic and workers.

During the session, Sumwalt outlined how failures at all levels to stop work on the project or to close the highway to vehicle traffic and pedestrians played a significant role in the tragedy. He emphasized the responsibility to speak out for public safety no matter what.

“I saw those crushed cars. Six people lost their lives because of what I will call hubris and professional arrogance,” he stated. “I don’t care where you fit on the totem pole, if something doesn’t look right, you have an ethical and moral obligation to wave the flag.”

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## Access Virtual PECon Webinars

NSPE members who registered for an all-access pass and individual sessions can access webinar recordings at their convenience. Members who were unable to attend PECon can [purchase and access](#) some individual sessions at a discounted member price.

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## Coming Soon: ‘Fireside Chat’ Series

NSPE is hosting a set of fireside chat style webinars on legislative issues affecting the future of the engineering profession, as well as the here and now.

Monday, August 31 (TBD)

**Diversity is the Future of Engineering: Opportunities in STEM Education**

Monday, September 14 (3 p.m. ET)

**Building for the Future**, with US Rep. Bruce Westerman, P.E. (R-AR)

Be on the lookout for more information!

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22314**