The Foundation of the Wall and Ceiling Industry went to Harvard this year—to do some teaching.

Fulfilling one of the principle purposes of the organization, representatives of the industry took part in the Foundation Educational Program at the Fourth Annual Construction Materials and Technology Institute.

The Institute, sponsored by the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, is designed to offer those who teach architectural subjects at colleges and universities across the United States a closer and more practical look at the current methods and practices of our industry. The Institute is funded by a number of construction associations and organizations, including the Foundation of the Wall and Ceiling Industry.

What has made these “teach the teachers” seminars so meaningful is that they address the pressing need for modern architects to marry architecture with construction. Without a working knowledge of what industry technology offers, architects are seriously hampered in their design efforts. At the same time, technology moves swiftly and various industry groups are anxious that architects become familiar with the most appropriate interface and management of these systems. Because the wall and ceiling industry represents a wide spectrum of systems and technologies that need to be communicated to designers, the Foundation has participated in the Institute program for the last three years.

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Besides the Foundation, other sponsors include the Brick Institute of America, the Indiana Limestone Institute of America, the National Cement Masonry Association and the American Wood Council.

Each sponsoring organization pays a fee to participate, with the fees used to provide “fellowships” to the approximately fifty participating architectural professors. This year’s Institute was held at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University. In previous years, the event was held in Philadelphia at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business.

The Foundation pulled together a strong team of wall and ceiling industry professionals for its portion of the Institute program. They included Gene Fisher, AWCI Technical Director; Gene Erwin, President of Wall/Ceiling Consulting; Donald Corbett, Sales Manager for Ohio Roll-Fab; David Brackett, Vice President of Government Relations for the Gypsum Association; Gilbert Phillips, President of Terstep Southwest; J.R. “Dick” Gorman, Director of Technical Services for the Plastering Information Bureau; Douglas C. Creed, President of Prism Ventures and Immediate Past President of EIMA; and Stan Mason, Manager of Prefabrication Services for Dryvit System, Inc.

The Foundation’s full-day program was given on August 12 and offered expertise in such subjects as light-gauge steel framing, use of the Gypsum Association’s Fire Resistance/Design Manual, acoustical ceiling design, plaster/stucco applications and standards, exterior insulation and finish...
On the evening before the seminar, Foundation Director Sue Dove reviewed the speakers schedule. Shown with her here are, left to right: David Brackett, Gypsum Association; J.R. “Dick” Gorman, Southern California’s Plastering Information Bureau, and W. Stanton Mason, architect and marketing executive from Dryvit System, Inc.

Gene Erwin, wall and ceiling industry consultant and former technical director for AWCI, reviewed the many things that can go wrong—and right—in designing and specifying work.

Don Corbett, sales executive for Ohio Roll Fab, covered the uses and abuses of steel framing, emphasizing the stress values in steel panels.

Gil Phillips, president of Terstep Terstep, of Dallas, TX, discussed the vital importance of acoustics and the technology of standard as well as integrated ceilings.

She then introduced AWCI’s Technical Director, Gene Fisher, who acted as an informal master of ceremonies, introducing each industry speaker.

The first speaker for the industry was Donald Corbett, who stressed the need for architects and contractors to remain on the same wavelength. “In the construction industry,” Corbett said, “there are three reasons for lawsuits. They are: (1) poor design; (2) poor material choices and specifications, and (3) poor workmanship.” From there, the industry veteran gave a quick one-hour course on the most important features to keep in mind when designing with light-gauge steel. He covered the controversial deflection issue and went on to describe the design and installation aspects of light-gauge steel framing, including fastening techniques, the need to standardize framing member nomenclature and rust prevention.

Following Corbett, one of the industry’s top acoustical ceiling contractors, Gil Phillips, defined the design difficulties that architects encounter when specifying ceilings. “There is always the problem,” he said, “between the non-specific ‘loose’ specification versus the too-specific ‘tight’ specification.” Phillips dealt at length with the issue of the “or equal” clause which he warned, “opens up the specifications to the contractor.” “You’re admitting that some other product or application is just as good as that which you just specified,” he cautioned, “and you allow someone else, with different viewpoints, to determine what is actually installed.”
He urged greater cooperation between designer and contractor.

The Gypsum Association’s Dave Brackett reviewed his organization’s Fire Resistance/Design Manual, explaining the proper use of the manual to determine acoustical characteristics, fire resistance ratings, and fabrication and erection techniques for various wall assemblies.

Dick Gorman, an architect himself, reviewed the fundamental differences between Portland cement and gypsum plaster. He also dealt at length with various lathing materials and uses, as well as the adhesion characteristics of various materials. For example: “Plaster won’t adhere to drywall, so use a liquid bonding agent or wire lath or plain gypsum lath—or both,” he advised.

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Doug Creed, one of the pioneers in the EIFS industry, brought the architects up to date on these new, popular exterior wall systems. He described the two major types of systems, articulating carefully the pros and cons of each. “EIFS are barrier type wall systems,” he stated, “not drain types.” Creed covered industry specifications and the differences between the polymer modified vs. polymer based systems. He emphasized the flexibility of EIFS to accommodate shear forces, using the example of a 500-foot wall span that was finished in the synthetic product and suffered no cracking.

Another well-known architect and Dryvit executive, Stan Mason, provided a stimulating slide presentation relating panelization concepts to the design process. Mason showed a number of projects, utilizing both factory and on-site prefabricating, that successfully combined steel framing with the new, innovative wall systems.

In the final presentation, Gene Er-
struction failures. The failures ran the full gamut of construction possibilities from wall panels that didn’t fit the enclosure to a large bank lettering project where someone apparently had difficulty with the spelling of bank, spelling is “B-A-N-H.” Erwin emphasized the point that these failures could have been avoided with proper detailing and specifications.