

University Refutes NFB's Claim

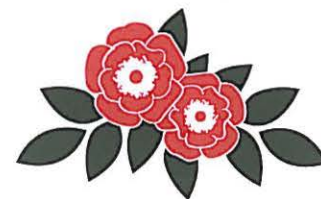
In response to the press release issued by the National Federation of Builders stating that young people should think twice about going to university, Dr Andrew Platten from the University of Central Lancashire's Department of Built Environment has issued the following statement.

"The National Federation of Builders has recently stated that it advises young people to think twice about entering University as a way towards a career in the Construction Industry. It should be noted that the industry is a large organisation, 1 in 14 of the working population have some connection to the industry. There is a national shortage of skills at all levels from the trades to engineers, managers and professional consultants. In short the industry is facing a huge skills gap. This observation is made on the basis of the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) publication "Construction Workforce Development Planning Brief 2001 – 2005". The figures are quite startling. The national cumulative requirement to managers in the industry over the period 2001-2005 will be 36460.

"The NFB press release identifies this issue, but on reflection the terms "think twice about University" and "a degree qualification, for example, doesn't always carry a guarantee of immediate employment" are divisive and misleading to many undergraduate students. As a University Head of Department and Chair of the Chartered Institute of Building, Recognition of Awards Division, I have the opportunity to meet a wide range of undergraduate students in the construction sector both at my own University and across 30 plus other Universities both in the UK and worldwide. From my experience the employment rate for graduates is extremely high. The rate is in excess of 90%. The demand upon our students in placement is such that many return as part time students holding a full time contract. Our students often hold trade qualifications, they may be mature students who have often 2 or 10 years trades or practical experience. Would these people be the ones to go back on to the tools. I do not dispute the NFB's call for more qualified workers. We are currently working to facilitate the needs of these students and build in skills as part of the learning process within the new foundation degree award in Construction. Where are the NFB in this process? I invite you to join us.

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“The industry needs qualified and professionally accredited managers, engineers and surveyors. I would rather see the industry working together in the manner proposed by Egan to better the quality of the industry. We specialise in developing graduate skills, the use of computer aided design, understanding materials technology and becoming effective project managers with a range of technical and inter personnel skills. This is the exciting and relevant challenge of a modern degree in the built environment. Surely this is something to be proud about. Most definitely, students should not think twice about such a programme of study.

“It is important not to forget the new entrants into the industry, those students entering from school or college. The industry needs to attract those from a wider background than previously seen within the sector. There is a lack of female students entering the industry. How are these young persons to be attracted into the construction industry? That is the real challenge to educational providers. I applaud the work of the CITB over national construction week, wherein a range of events such as the 6th form conference to be held in Manchester have been arranged to attract these people into professional courses and careers in the construction industry.

“I note the NFB article and I wish to welcome the NFB to the debate regarding the intake of young people into the construction industry. I would advise, don't knock what we do, work with us and be proactive.”

Dr Andrew Platten, MCIOB
Head of Department of Built Environment
University of Central Lancashire, Preston

Chair of Recognition of Awards Division, Chartered Institute of Building Member of the Construction & Built Environment National Foundation Degree Task Group.

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