

Foundation Partnerships are Backbone of Success

By Jennifer LeFevre, Program Director, RMC Research & Education Foundation

It's logical, even expected, that an organization such as the RMC Research & Education Foundation would work closely with a variety of groups in order to reach its goals and fulfill its mission. In the eight years since the Foundation was revitalized in earnest to become a major source of information and resources from which the concrete industry, and the nation as a whole, can benefit, the many partnerships the Foundation has fostered have been the key to its success. The Foundation has worked with several national and international allied associations, universities across North America, numerous governmental agencies and a host of professional consultants totaling over 50 partnerships in all.

Working closely with allied associations is vital to the Foundation given that concrete and construction-related organizations often share many of the same goals. It makes sense to partner rather than to unnecessarily expound duplicative efforts, especially funding in an era of tight budgets. The Foundation's work with the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association (NRMCA) has been particularly rewarding. The NRMCA's leadership in the Prescriptive-to-Performance (P2P) Initiative led to the Foundation to fund the work included on our popular "Research to Support the P2P Initiative" CD. Many of NRMCA's Standing Committees have also provided the Foundation with guidance on industry needs and have helped to review projects and proposals. The Foundation also works closely with the Portland Cement Association (PCA) and together they have co-funded many important projects to benefit the industry. Another close relationship the Foundation has is with the American Concrete Institute (ACI) and with ACI's



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Strategic Development Council, in particular, with whom the Foundation has formed a Strategic Partnership. It has also partnered with several state associations on a number of projects as well as with contractor and engineering organizations.

University research projects provide the Foundation with some of the most credible, detailed, and in-depth research reports and studies that are available anywhere in the world, and include endeavors with dozens of universities in the U.S. and Canada. These partnerships are often multiple-organization undertakings that may include the Foundation, several associations, and even more than one university working on and/or funding the project. These mutual endeavors have allowed the Foundation to expand its university contact list to over 75 representatives of the dozens of institutes of higher learning with whom the Foundation works. As more university

engineering departments continue to work with concrete on a more frequent basis, we anticipate that many more contacts and partnerships will develop.

The Foundation has a special relationship with the Concrete Industry Management (CIM) program universities, including the flagship program at Middle Tennessee State University and the programs at Arizona State University, California State University-Chico, the New Jersey Institute of Technology, the newest program at Texas State University. With its most recent commitment, the Foundation is one of the largest supporters of the CIM program with a total of \$925,000 pledged through 2011. The RMC Research & Education Foundation was one of the first supporters of the CIM program and often partners with these universities on projects beyond the CIM program.

Many research studies are performed at special centers or institutes that are already

established at a university, such as at the National Concrete Pavement Technology Center (CP Tech Center) at Iowa State University or at the Texas Transportation Institute at Texas A&M University. Other organizations bring together industry, academia and government to form a partnership. The Transportation Engineering and Road Research Alliance (TERRA), which is administered by University of Minnesota and of which the Foundation is a member, is a quintessential example of such an organization bringing together these three important elements to facilitate a strong research program. The Foundation works closely with each of these organizations, and others like them, and our mutual endeavors have proved quite successful.

Some of the end-users of the Foundation's work are representatives of federal, state and local governments. Many of these representatives learn about the Foundation's resources through media reporting or through other direct relationships with the Foundation and its donors. But the best way to get any government agency's attention on a specific project is to co-fund a project

with it. Through its direct investment and interest in the outcome of the study, there is an immediate buy-in of the agency of the final results of the study as well as assistance in the dissemination of the results to other agencies and, in some cases, other branches of the federal government. The Foundation has partnered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), especially Region III, on a variety of programs and this is a particularly fruitful and mutually beneficial relationship. Among the projects that the Foundation is currently involved with is the development of the Green Highways Partnership Training, which EPA Region III is co-funding through the Low Impact Development Center. The Foundation also counts the Federal Highway Administration, the U.S. Department of Transportation, the U.S. Department of Energy and the National Institutes of Standards and Technology as partners on projects.

On occasion, the Foundation seeks to work with industry consultants who may bring an expertise to a project not available through a university. Sometimes these consultants are companies that concentrate

in a specific area in which the Foundation has issued a request for proposal. Others are individual consultants who are long-time industry experts and who may be able to add something fresh to a project. Working with consultants offers the Foundation access to a wide range of professional skills and proficiencies that often perfectly meet the needs of a proposed project.

Finally, it cannot be stated strongly enough that the partnership between the Foundation and its donors is the most critical of all. Without the generous support of both individual and corporate donors alike, the RMC Research & Education Foundation would be unable to fulfill its mission to support research and educational programs that will increase professionalism and quality in the concrete industry. The Foundation is grateful to all of its partners for their support and friendship and looks forward to continuing mutually beneficial endeavors in the future. ■

For more information on the work of the RMC Research & Education Foundation, please visit www.rmc-foundation.org.

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