

Transcript for Conversations @ KAFM: CMUnow: March 2020

Katlin Birdsall: Remarkable accomplishments are happening every day on the Colorado Mesa University and Western Colorado Community College campuses. From faculty instruction and research, to student projects and community involvement. CMUnow is a monthly segment and the KAFM community affairs hour, where we interview faculty, athletic coaches, and students to keep you up to date on all things CMU and WCCC. I'm Katlin Birdsall along with my co-host David Ludlam. We'll have two segments on the show today and our first guest today is Hotel Maverick Shaw Construction Project Engineer Logan Cole. Hi Logan, welcome to the show.

Logan Cole: Thanks for having me.

Katlin Birdsall: Yes, thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule. We know you're chugging along over there so thanks for coming down and talking to the KAFM listeners.

Logan Cole: You bet.

Katlin Birdsall: So why don't we start off today talking a little bit about yourself and maybe you could give a quick background on how you got your current job at Shaw Construction.

Logan Cole: Well, I started going to CMU back in 2011, I was a Biology major actually but then I transferred to construction management and then I got my job at Shaw Construction and I've been building CMU building pretty much ever since.

David Ludlam: Biology to construction, what made you switch?

Logan Cole: My cousin graduated with a biology degree and he was not having good luck finding a job so I decided I would get out of that as quickly as possible.

David Ludlam: What's interesting about having you on is the buildings that are going up around CMU, whether they're talking about the new hotel or a new classroom or new resident halls, and you're not the one that draws up the design, but you're the one that actually makes these buildings come to life. What's it like to be a project manager on a construction site, for people who don't know anything about construction

Logan Cole: It's pretty exciting. First of all, it takes a village to make one of these building happen starting with the design team, then the owners and giving us design documents to build off of. From start to finish it's a lot of team efforts, coordination, just a ton of stuff that has to happen from start to finish.

David: Just a hundred conversations every day that have to happen.

Logan Cole: Countless conversations.

Katlin Birdsall: I was going to say I feel lucky enough that a couple weeks ago we actually got take a sneak peek tour. We were taking photos for CMU and Hotel Maverick's social media accounts and you were giving us the tour and I was just blown away by how much activity was happening in the building at one time. I mean every level we were on there was all kinds of construction, whether it was lighting fixtures, or painting or flooring or on rooftop restaurant, the patio and outside. And when you see a project on that scale of things I was just curious how you keep it on track and what that process really is

from paper to reality, because my work in the marketing office is quite different than someone in the construction management world.

Logan: Sure, you know when you were touring the building we were in the finishing stage and we were just about done and during this stage there are a lot of different trades on site, from electricians to plumbers, everyone is out there compared to earlier stages in the project.

Katlin: Even just all the scheduling, I think about timing. I know this was your major and this is your profession so to you this all makes sense but I like how do you even time out what guys come first and when you order the products you need. And you're not only building the hotel itself that is going to have 60 rooms but you're building a restaurant that has a bar and an outdoor patio, the coffee shop downstairs— all of these components that you are scheduling out and making it timed and perfect to making it all come together.

Logan: There's definitely an order of operations to everything that goes in the building. Early on when we were still planning and in the design phase of the project we come up with a detailed construction schedule so from day one we have a pretty good idea of who is coming when and what materials we need by that point. We get all the products lined up and approved and ready to ship out when we need it.

Katlin: There's a method to the madness.

Logan: There's a method to the madness for sure.

Katlin: You're listening to CMU now on KAFM Community Affairs and our first guest today is the Hotel Maverick's Shaw Construction Project Engineer Logan Cole.

David Ludlam: Logan, if I understand correctly you were a student at CMU and you graduated from the construction management program. What is it like working and building and contributing to the campus you went to instead of working on another project? I mean you're getting to help grow the campus that sort of gave you your career. What's that like for you?

Logan: It's pretty rewarding, actually. It's nice being able to be back on my alma mater and build a lot of the campus and I went to school at. Half of me is excited about it, the other half-joking that I graduated three years ago and I'm still driving to campus every morning.

(laughter)

David: You're on the 10-year plan since you're still here. (Laughter.) This isn't the first building you've worked on. How many buildings have you been a part of on campus during this growth phase?

Logan: This is the third project I've been on building wise. We also built the softball bleachers. The first one was the health sciences project, which was the demo and remodel of the old Community Hospital. The second is the engineering building also known as Confluence Hall. Now we're working on the hotel about to wrap this up.

Katlin: Out of those three construction projects, because they all are very different. I know with the engineering building you had to build huge rooms where students can work on really large projects. I know there's a WindTunnel, all kind of different classrooms. Do you have one project that sticks out to you and is your favorite and why?

Logan: I think the hotel is probably my favorite project because its unique and it's a boutique and a niche hotel. It has a lot of fancy, nice finishings compared to a classroom building. The classrooms are still nice inside, but classroom style is a lot different. This has cool features; the architecture of the building is unique alone and is really interesting. It's not a typical square building.

Katlin: There is the restaurant on the top floor as well as an outdoor seating area, did that add a layer of complexity to this building having it three, four stories up?

Logan: The patio area isn't too difficult to build but the kitchen, there's a lot involved there. Mechanical, electrical, plumbing, there's lot of coordination with them and getting with our kitchen designer to make sure that all goes smoothly. The kitchen has been a challenge, there's a lot of stuff in there.

Katlin Birdsall: I was saying when before I worked at CMU years ago I was a server and bartender and a manager at a local brewery here in town and I was saying I was really impressed with the layout out of the kitchen and the bar, even where you had the ice machine, because for me as a server and a bartender that would have been perfect if that had been where I had worked, so it seems like it was really thought out and laid out.

David Ludlam: You should take that as a compliment because everywhere Katlin and I go, she's always critiquing kitchens so take that is a compliment.

Katlin Birdsall: You are listening to CMU now on KAFM Community Affairs and our first guest today is the Hotel Maverick Shaw Construction Project Engineer Logan Cole.

David Ludlam: Logan, one more question for you. If there was another biology student out there thinking of going into construction management, or any student that might be considering it, what would you say to them about CMU'S program? I mean it worked for you. What did you like about it and what would you say to potential students who might be thinking about going down that same path?

Logan Cole: You know, I highly recommended it. It's really rewarding and construction is booming right now so everyone is looking for project engineers right out of college, so you know I think it's good job security a good job opportunity coming out of college with a construction management degree. If you like working in a team setting and putting in the extra hours, you know sometimes you are there late at night figuring things out. So yeah, I would highly recommend it. It's a rewarding job you know, especially when you're working on a project that lasts 18 months long. You know when you're working on something for 18 months and you finally finish it it's really rewarding.

Katlin Birdsall: I always thought that must be fairly rewarding in your profession that you did get to start this project from the very beginning on paper and then you get to see it in reality and it's there. Whereas for us in marketing, when we're working on marketing and advertising campaigns it's more abstract concepts and a little bit less of that tangible feel, so I've always thought that construction management would be a really rewarding profession and career for you to be able to see this thing that you helped build. So, I actually have one more question for you before we let you go, so if time and money resources weren't an issue, what type of building would you want to build on CMU's campus? Have you thought about that at all? Just something fun, an exciting project.

Logan Cole: Um, that's a tough one. The sky is the limit. You know CMU they come up with really fancy buildings and designs and I don't know, that's tough.

Katlin Birdsall: You'd be more than happy to build any of them?

Logan Cole: Absolutely.

Katlin Birdsall: Well thank you so much Logan for coming on the show today. We really appreciate it. Alright so don't go anywhere because after a short break will be right back with Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering Sarah Lanci.

Katlin Birdsall: Welcome back to CMUnow, a monthly show where we talked about the remarkable work happening at Colorado Mesa University and Western Colorado Community College. We'd like to welcome our next guest Professor of Mechanical Engineering Sara Lanci. Welcome to the show.

Sarah Lanci: Thanks for having me

Katlin Birdsall: So I know you've been with CMU for six years now, has it been six years?

Sarah Lanci: Yep.

Katlin Birdsall: You've really seen our computer science and engineering department grow, which in itself is even new, it used to be just the engineering department but we added in computer science. You've also moved into a new building. You've seen expanded program offerings, but I was a little bit curious if you could tell us about your personal journey before you came to CMU and what brought you here.

Sarah Lanci: Yea. I grew up in Wyoming in a tiny town and my dad was an engineer and my mom was an art teacher and they were both outdoor educators before those careers. So, I grew up loving the outdoors. I went to Michigan State for my undergrad and I studied material science and then I needed to get back to the mountains so I went to grad school at Colorado School of Mines and decided okay maybe I'll branch away from the mountains a little bit. I went up to Portland, Oregon and I was working as a process control engineer for a company that makes jet engineer parts and so I held a few rolls in that company. Then I needed to get back to the Rockies and Colorado, so we ended up in Grand Junction and literally found this part time job at CMU in the newspaper, so that marketing still works. I worked as an adjunct professor for two semesters and then got hired on full-time from there. I'm not looking back this is great.

David Ludlam: I have a question that stems from something I've noticed at my daughter's elementary school. There actually aren't any male teachers in the building. I don't know what the numbers are but I think when it comes to nurses, males are underrepresented, and this is sometimes a political issue but it's not when you talk about it. I really love how you address the issue on a shortage of women in the STEM fields but especially engineer. I want to ask your perspective on this because it's not about, from your view, quotas or having an exact 50/50 in any given profession. It's about developing a passion for something early on whether you're a male or female and I wanted you to talk a little bit about this because I've heard you discuss this with students before and I think it's really important how you approach this issue.

Sarah Lanci: Thanks. I think it's a great goal to try to strive for 50/50 representation just so that we know we have everybody's perspective when we're approaching a problem but what I really think is that we need to make STEM a part of kids' lives. It just needs to be part of their day-to-day experience and needs to not be this intangible pie and just make it a part of their life. So many things that we interact with can

be explained with science, technology and math and I think that if we can make it part of their day-to-day lives then we can just nurture their curiosity. I'm a parent to two small girls and it's so easy to say, "No, no we don't have time for that" or "No, it's too complicated, we can't build one of those" but if we do make it part of their lives and it's not pushed to the side until they get into school then they're not afraid of it. They will feel comfortable and confident questioning these topics and really pushing the boundaries because we should all strive to make this world a better place and this is how we're going to do it. We need to just say you live in this world and you can make change. I have no doubt that my kids and this upcoming generation will make that change.

David Ludlam: The way you talk about it is really kind of wonderful because it has a general neutral affect so to speak. It's about creating that passion early on in kids and then they might select whatever profession their skills and talents lead them towards.

Sara Lanci: I very much believe that if somebody is just interested. So let's start with that curiosity and I try to make this part of my class at CMU. Just be curious, ask the questions. That is how you're going to go find those problems that need to be solved and it doesn't have to be engineering, it can be biology, construction management, health sciences, social sciences it can drape over this whole broad-spectrum but you have to have that passion to persist. You know, dive through these broad topics and get to the nitty-gritty details that will drive solutions that will make the world a better place. But be curious and you should have fun because when you have fun you'll stick with it.

Katlin Birdsall: And not only that but it's the opportunity. I think that's kind of what we've talked about before too. So, giving it to children at a younger age so then they can explore all the possible realms of which way they can go later on in life. So as long as they know what opportunities are available then they can pursue it. Then it's more tangible.

Sarah Lanci: It's not reserved for anyone special it's for everyone.

Katlin Birdsall: Good. Well you are listening to CMU now on KAFM Community Affairs and our second guest today is Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering Sara Lanci. I know I've worked with you personally on a couple different projects and you seem like you have such a passion and vigor for what you do. I'm just curious about what you think is the best part of your job as an engineering faculty member at CMU?

Sarah Lanci: I get to focus on the students. It really is the best part of this school; we don't have teacher assistants, and we have small scholarly agendas, but it's not the primary focus of our job. We want to be here to teach and so watching these students as freshman, you know, struggle with certain concepts and struggle with working in teams and struggle with writing, and watching them evolve and mature and grow and become confident competent future engineers is the best. So I think yeah, just getting to watch them grow is absolutely the most rewarding part.

Katlin Birdsall: I know when I've been fortunate enough to cover what you guys are working on over in the engineering department and what the students are doing, it always blows me away that you've got 18,19,20 year-olds that are working on these really intricate projects and problems and really solving things that are going to help our world in the long run makes me really optimistic about the future.

Sarah Lanci: Me too. I'm blown away too everyday watching what they come up with. Their own personal projects that I see them working on, they are engaging in really unique ways.

David Ludlam: Tell us about Go Baby Go and tell our listeners what that is. Earlier you talked about making the world a better place, talk about Go Baby Go and how that makes the world a better place through students and engineering.

Sarah Lanci: Yes, absolutely. Go baby Go is a worldwide program where chapters of engineering students or University students or community members can work on modifying these little toy rides on electric cars for kids with limited mobility. So the first thing we do is we rewire the foot pedal up to a hand access button so the kid with limited mobility in their legs can push a button and they have control over making this car go. No one is pushing them in a wheelchair, or you know guiding them through adaptive technology. These kids are in control and it allows them to explore with and engage in their world in the way that they want to, not with the directive of anybody else.

David Ludlam: Do you have a specific child that stands out in your mind that you've seen assisted by the program or a student that was really moved and maybe it changed their trajectory of their career or their educational journey.

Sarah Lanci: That's a great question. So many of these kids that we've helped through Go Baby Go, we've done this over the last five years, and we've adapted 30-some cars. Several stand out and one recently there was a missionary family who usually are based in Africa and they came back to visit Grand Junction for a while. I have a student who recently learned about this humanitarian engineering discipline and he's been helping with Go Baby Go in the past, but to see someone living in another country and a child that has very limited adaptive technology in limited experience with that, the student made a little 3D printed case for this controller so that the car wouldn't speed up as quickly as they typically do. So it would be this really gentle acceleration for this child, and the child has very limited mobility, he's in a special seat. But watching the passion in this student apply his technical knowledge and you know really be thinking big picture of okay I'm not just helping this one kid, I'm helping this family and I'm helping this family go help somebody else do their work in Africa. It's just a great overall experience in the great intertwining of all this technology and humanity.

Katlin Birdsall: And I think that's what I've loved when I've covered the Go Baby Go event was when you see it and you get to be there and watch how passionate the students are about the project, and about the car, and really getting to know the kiddo that they're helping. Then we get to see the kids actually get in the car and get to drive it around and have that mobility that so many of us take advantage of. It's a pretty amazing event.

Sarah Lanci: Those children's faces the first time they push the buttons. They are surprised at first and then they're like, "I know what this is going to do" and they go full force and it's pretty incredible to watch.

Katlin Birdsall: Great. Well you are listening to CMU now on KAFM Community Affairs and our second guest is Professor of Mechanical Engineering Sara Lanci.

David Ludlam: Well we've covered a lot of ground today. We talked about gender in STEM, we've talked about making the world a better place with engineering. I guess same question as our last guest, when you think about students who might want to pursue engineering or people in the community who might be wanting to turn over a new leaf, what is it about CMU'S engineering program that you think makes it unique? What makes it a program that's worthy of someone enrolling in it?

Sara Lanci: Great question. I think we can kind of go along this line of passion that we touched on a little bit today and just say that all of the faculty at CMU, they want to be here, this isn't just a steppingstone. We're not here to teach classes just to check a box to pursue our research and our discipline. We are here for the students and I think that we've really, really embraced that in engineering. We give 110% trying to figure out okay and how can we best break this down and not just break it down but show the application. And so we have these beautiful small class sizes where we can give this individual attention. We can create these projects that really engage with their material. We're not just flipping through pages in a textbook or trying to get them not just to understand but to apply it and go beyond. So I think that it's really the passion of the faculty, the dedication of these cohorts. The students really become friends through all of this, and they sleep in the building for all I know. They are dedicated and I think it's a great community that we've built.

Katlin Birdsall: Thank you so much again for taking the time out of your schedule to come on and chat with David and myself and to the KAFM listeners and let them know what's happening over in the engineering world here at CMU.

Before we head out today, we actually have a few minutes, so I thought maybe we could chat about what's happening at CMU as far as some events that are coming up. One thing we might want to mention if you were listening to our first segment and we were talking to Login Cole about the Hotel Maverick, is that it will be opening here in April. We're not giving a definitive date but we're going to be opening in April. Is there anything else that you think listeners need to know about the hotel?

David Ludlam: It's going to be a huge asset for the community. Whether you're looking at something fun like a staycation or you have relatives that are coming into town and want a high-quality experience for themselves. It's going to include dining and an upper-scale experience here in Grand Junction. It's a beautiful setting and I think that's going to be a real asset for CMU and the community. I really encourage listeners to stay tuned. We're going to be having a grand opening that I think is going to create a lot of excitement around the project and it's going to be a feature that will really showcase just how wonderful campus is as an environment.

Katlin Birdsall: If you want to stay up-to-date on what's happening with the hotel you can head over to TheHotelMaverick.com and sign up for our email communication list. I know we have a lot of people reaching out on social with questions but that's probably the best way to want to stay up-to-date on when the grand opening will be, how you can make reservations, what the restaurant is up to, the coffee shop. The views from the restaurant are pretty spectacular up there.

David Ludlam: They really are. It's probably one of the better views in the valley, for sure in terms of restaurant facilities.

Katlin Birdsall: It's the third or fourth outdoor patio that will be really unique that is on that level. So what else do we have going on for March?

David Ludlam: You know one of the things that I think our listeners have heard about before is the CMU Civic Forum. It's sort of this umbrella phrase that we used to describe the events that engage students in civility, political issues and also the community. So the next one we have coming up is the Michrina Lecture Series with Mary Kim Titla. She's going to be here on March 11 and that's going to start at 6:30 with a reception, meet and greet with a guest lecturer at 7. I don't want to say a guest lecturer, it's going

to be a conversation with the community. So that's our next Civic Forum event. I think there's a lot of enthusiasm on campus and the community for that one.

Katlin Birdsall: I know for our performing arts department we just finished Fidler on the Roof. If you were lucky enough to get into that show, I know a lot of them sold out. We have another production coming in April.

David Ludlam: It's a play called the Wolves and it's about a girls' high school soccer team. You know that might sound like it's appropriate for all ages but this does have some mature themes and language, so we do ask parents to consider that. It's going to be April 9 through the 18 and of course we'll be at the Moss Performing Arts Center and so we encourage people to check that out. It's going to be a good one.

Katlin Birdsall: You can get tickets at coloradomesa.edu/tickets. Another one of our big events coming April, I mean we always have a lot of events that happen in the springtime at CMU, but another one is Foundations Day of Giving.

David Ludlam: You know a lot of times when people think about giving to any organization or nonprofit, they think of those high-profile type of projects that everyone is familiar with but the Day of Giving is an opportunity to really showcase a whole litany a whole diversity of opportunities for people that might want to give in a unique way, to student clubs or organizations, to a building project or to a program or to a scholarship and so the Day of Giving is in April 10th. We're excited about that and it's a great chance for people to give to CMU the way that they think is best for them and their values and what they care about.

Katlin Birdsall: That's what I loved about last year, we started to see these student clubs raising money for whatever initiative they're trying to accomplish or whatever conference they're trying to get to, and they all really got behind it and got competitive with each other and it was really a fun day. And not only raising money for these projects but I think a nice competitive way students can get involved with community members.

David Ludlam: Do you know what you're going to give to?

Katlin Birdsall: I don't know. I need to check them all out, I gave to two or three different ones last year. That's my problem I can't give to just one.

David Ludlam: Game-day decision.

Katlin Birdsall: Yes, exactly.

Well this segment airs on the second Tuesday of each month. A podcast of today show at KAFMRadio.Org. I'm Katlin Birdsall along with my co-host David Ludlam and we'll be back next month for another addition of CM now on the Community Affairs hour.