

GWI Education Webinar, "The Value of an FM Degree," October 22, 2020

By Meredith Lovejoy, Principal, Regional Development Director, TEECOM, IFMA NYC Board Member, Co-Chair GWI

On Thursday, October 22, 2020, the NY GWI committee presented its second webinar titled "The Benefits of a FM Degree." Our objective was to share the benefits of having an FM degree, from the perspective of - and for the benefit of - students, educators, employers, and facility managers in various fields.

The panel was moderated by Dr. Audrey Schultz, a tenured Full-Professor at Pratt Institute. Dr. Schultz teaches Facilities Management courses in the IFMA and ABET accredited STEM designated Master of Science FM Program. She has held positions as an interior designer, facilities manager, and as both project and construction manager. Dr. Schultz received her PhD in the Built Environment from The University of Salford in England. She is a member of IFMA and she sits on the local CMAA Metro NY/NJ Chapter Board as Director of Student Outreach Committee.

Panelists comprised:

- Giselle Holder, Director Acuitas Caribbean Facilities Management Company Limited.
- Ryan King, Principal, Real Estate Solutions, Accenture
- Darryl Halickman, Senior Project Manager, Real Estate, Development + Facilities at NYU Langone Health
- Jose Loren, Americas Facilities Program Manager | Facilities Operations, Facebook

Panelists shared how having a degree has changed their career path and enabled them to navigate the changing work landscape, while also shaping expectations for their businesses, and enabled them to advance in their career trajectory. Discussion topics included an understanding of the impact of having a FM degree from the employer's perspective: How does having degreed FMs help businesses navigate changes in the

workplace and plan for the future. The discussion will include design and planning decisions that are being made today, and how having a FM degree enables professionals to make impactful decisions for the future viability of facilities.

Panelists opened with an overview of their undergraduate degrees and background, and why they choose to study Facilities Management. Giselle shared that she studied electrical and computer engineering, and then project management. Her facilities background is nested in engineering. Jose's major at Siena College was in marketing and management, but he fell in love with real estate while working for GMAC during his college years. Darryl received her architecture degree at McGill University in Montreal. She graduated in 2008, at the beginning of the recession, and was laid off by her job with an architectural firm. She was then hired in facilities management at her alma mater, McGill. It was a game changer, and soon after she pursued her FM degree at Pratt. Ryan was in the same undergraduate program at Siena with Jose; he was pursuing a dual major in accounting and was heading toward a CPA career. Through the college, he landed a Facilities Coordinator position at PepsiCo. It gave him a ground-up perspective; he interfaced with engineers, the loading dock, the mail room; all aspects of facilities. The job ignited a passion.

When asked how they feel having a higher education in facilities management has helped them navigate the changing facilities landscape, and shape expectations for the company's success, Darryl shared the current Covid 19 pandemic has required a trained professional ie IAQ, ergonomic workspaces, design, value, Ensuring good environments are more top of mind. Jose stated that communication skills are of utmost importance; trust, relationships are the foundation of his work.

Importantly, the panel discussed how waving a degree in Facilities Management enabled them to advance their career. Jose said "things happen quickly. It's a fast world we work in today, we often have to find a quick solution. Trust & relationships and the ability to communicate and understand all facets of the workplace." He attributes his success to having his degree from Pratt Institute.

Ryan shared that having a FM degree enabled him to explore different areas within real estate and facilities; allowed him to pursue his passion and find the best fit for him/to hold his interest.

Darryl worked at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) while studying to obtain her degree. The minute she graduated, she said “the offers kept coming.” Everyone she interacts with on a daily basis at NYU Langone has a specialized or advanced degree. Having a FM degree allows her to work on a similar level with her peers. She feels her degree sets her apart.

Giselle’s company -a construction company - saw a direct link to renovating spaces and handing over space, and enabled her to formalize the FM portfolio. She is now director of the FM portfolio. “It’s a broader view. I am expected to be an expert at everything from people management to building management.”

Dr. Schultz asked, “what recommendations do you have for IFMA and GWI for improving awareness of a career in Facilities Management?”

Thinking about IFMA and GWI specifically, Jose said “education and awareness is key. The general population does not know what facilities management is. Their definition of it is narrow. I’ve always had this mission because I have dealt with tough customers on the CEO level. CEO’s see facilities managers as a lower level position. Without us, CEO’s could not be successful in their work.”

Regarding his volunteer work with GWI, Jose said, “talking to the Department of Education to make sure that commissioners, teachers and counselors understand what facilities management is is key. We attend commission meetings to talk about FM. We Show the progression in FM from coordinator to the highest levels; that tends to catch everyone’s attention. People don’t think of a full career in this industry. Education is important. The more we can speak to what we do, the better for everyone. GWI has a toolkit.

Jose is passionate about diversity and underrepresented communities. Thanks to the work he is doing with GWI, he is able to go to those communities, find talent, educate

them. He measures success by being able to reach and educate students and sharing his passion.

“Having a comprehensive understanding of the whole of real estate has been key,” Jose said. Jose is a Program Manager at Facebook. The programs he built are not specific to facilities; he is currently working on remote work and how to bring in-office experience to the remote experience. Pratt gave him the foundation and complemented his career so he understands both the company and the real estate holistically.

About Global Workforce Initiative (GWI)

GWI launched its efforts as a new committee under the IFMA NYC chapter in the fall of 2019. Its mission is to reach students from diverse backgrounds to show Facility Management is a career of choice; support and help expand IFMA-Accredited FM Degree Programs at local community and 4-year colleges; and support students with academic scholarships to pursue local FM educational programs.

To watch the video of the webinar, click the YouTube Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ttlvw77ImVc>

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