

# School is in Session!

Chapter 10 holds a right of way student workshop



BY VIVIAN NGUYEN

*Last September, Chapter 10 conducted a 4-hour student workshop in partnership with Vincennes University's Surveying Technology Program. The workshop had a total of 24 student participants. We asked the primary planners, Patrick McCallister, SR/WA, and Cindy Candler, PS, to tell us more about the workshop.*

## Can you tell us a little bit about what inspired you to develop this workshop?

**C:** Chapter 10 has been looking for creative ways to educate high school and college students about all aspects of the right of way industry. Vincennes University (VU) has always been agreeable to let companies or professionals come in and speak to the students. It felt like a logical place to start a new outreach program.

**P:** I had been talking with VU's Surveying Technology Program Coordinator Jessica Hess, PS, about a survey summer camp they do for high school students and asked if we could do something similar for the right of way industry. I had been at VU previously to talk with their students about the right of way professions, so once I brought up this idea, she was fully on board.



## How did you market the workshop to reach a younger audience?

**P:** Indiana Chapter 10 and Vincennes University made a joint effort in marketing the workshop. The VU outreach coordinator sent the workshop flyer and details to the high school contacts they had. Indiana Chapter 10 blasted the information out through our social media platforms in addition to sending mass emails. I also posted multiple times on my personal social media sites as well as reached out directly to contacts I'd made with high schools throughout the years. Other volunteers did the same to help get the word out.

## Can you describe how the workshop is structured?

**P:** The workshop was developed to be interactive — students are walked through a typical transportation project. We provided the students with a title report and plan sheet for a partial acquisition of a property needed for a road widening project. We then guided them through creating a parcel plat and a legal description for the area needed. Next, our appraiser volunteers walked them through the appraisal process, had them evaluate comparable sales, value existing improvements and complete abbreviated appraisal forms. Lastly, with everything they had completed from the previous tasks, they prepared a uniform offer and deeds needed to complete the acquisition.

**C:** I would like to add that the room that VU provided at their Indianapolis location was perfect for this event. The technology in the room with the digital projector where we could project in live view of the instructor walking through the process. This helped keep the class on track and made sure no one fell behind.

## How did the high school students receive the workshop?

**C:** I was very impressed with how the students reacted to the hands-on approach. The project that Patrick chose was near Indianapolis, so the students were familiar with the area. One student told me the history of the surrounding buildings and had Google Earth pulled up on his phone to look at the aerial photography. I was impressed by the student's initiative to dig deeper and use his knowledge of the area.

**P:** We received feedback that the students really enjoyed the activity part. One of the engineering teachers from Zionsville High School, Jason Donkersloot, shared a few words about how valuable a workshop like this is for students:

“The idea of doing this workshop is great. I had Pat out to my classroom in 2022, and it was good information to hear but having the students work through an example was great! It was good to have the students take information that we also talk about in class and apply it to a real job experience. Hearing about all the different professions that are associated with the right of way industry was good for the students as many were not aware of such jobs. Even if they don't want to be in this industry, just hearing about professions that one wouldn't normally be exposed to helps them realize how many different career paths there truly is.”

## What techniques or approaches did you find effective when engaging with the younger audience?

**C:** Since this wasn't a lecture approach and incorporated activities throughout, the students were more engaged. When it comes to a younger audience, they don't respond well a two-hour lecture, as it's less likely to capture and keep their attention.

## What were some challenges you faced while planning or holding the workshop?

**P:** This was the first time we held a workshop so we weren't exactly sure how many students we would have sign up. The room we had at the Vincennes University Aviation Center in Indianapolis could hold up to 100 students, so we decided not to limit the registration. There was a lot of discussion about how many activities could we do in the timeframe we had. This first workshop was for sure a learning experience.

**C:** It was good to get feedback from the teachers on when the right or better time of year is to hold an information class like this. The end of September was good, however, a lot of students were just getting back into the swing of classes. We may try to push the next class into the second semester.





### Do you think the students from the workshop walked away with a better understanding of the right of way industry and may want to pursue a career down the line?

**P:** I am interested to hear Cindy's thoughts, but you could tell that some of the students were a lot more engaged and interested than others. I certainly believe the students walked away with a better understanding of what it is we do and that some saw right of way as a viable career path.

**C:** I agree. I also think we did a good job showing how there are many professions that make up the right of way industry: land agents, appraisers, civil engineers, environmental professionals, lawyers and land surveyors, to name a few. I know the students had heard of some of these professions, but this allowed them to look at how they are involved in the right of way profession. Another key part of the workshop was we demonstrated how all these professions work together at different companies to complete a project.

### Are there any plans to hold more student workshops like this in the future?

**P:** Right now, the thought is that this will be an annual event held in different parts of the state. Jessica told me she was very happy with how this first workshop went and would be interested in having more: "It was great partnering with the IRWA in offering this workshop! I appreciated being able to get a more in-depth look into the varying career opportunities within the right of way industry outside of surveying and am looking forward to being able to point both surveying and non-surveying students toward this industry. All of the presenters were very

knowledgeable and really showed a passion and excitement for what they do. I look forward to future partnership opportunities with the IRWA."

**C:** I believe this is something our Chapter would like to continue and even partner with other colleges/universities or directly with the schools. Due to this idea, Chapter 10 created and awarded two post-secondary scholarships this year to be used for 2024. One of the criteria is that the student must be in a field in the right of way industry. One of our Chapter 10 past Chapter presidents, Angela Deddish, SR/WA, brought the idea to the table to include our scholarship recipients in the next workshop so they can discuss their college experience and help us in reaching the younger generation.

### What advice do you have for other Chapters who may be interested in planning similar student workshops in their area?

**P:** Well, I think first I would encourage any Chapter that would be interested in hosting this in their area to reach out to Cindy or myself so we can discuss all aspects of what we went through. I am a big believer in that there is no need to recreate the wheel if someone is already driving on one.

**C:** I am with Patrick. We are here to share what we have learned and help other Chapters. We know everyone has their network and if we all work our networks together, we can get the message out there about our profession. What I love about Chapter 10 is someone has an idea, and everyone comes around it to see how we can implement and help others. I think one of the reasons this was success is due to our Chapter having open dialogue at our board meetings for brainstorming new ideas. 🌟