

Creativity at the heart of structural engineering education: The legacy of Professor Mike Barnes

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Abstract

One of the most important attributes of our structural engineering profession is that it is highly creative. This creativity should be exploited endlessly by educators of the next generation of structural engineers because creativity leads to passion, which leads to inspiration, which leads to students learning almost everything they need to know themselves. This represents true education for life-long learning, without boundaries. It fosters an inquisitive questioning attitude, deep technical understanding, a collaborative spirit and a sense of imagination and fun in design.

During his time as the Head of Civil Engineering at the University of Bath in the UK, Professor Mike Barnes embedded this philosophy profoundly in the psyche of all academic colleagues. Mike was the greatest academic I have ever had the wonderful privilege to call a colleague and a friend. Our graduates have benefitted greatly from his ideas on education, and this paper highlights the reasons why his legacy is so crucial to the education of designers of the built environment, particularly as we enter the digital revolution.