Value Tested

RMC Research & Education Foundation books 30 years of cutting-edge programs to advance the concrete industry

In 1991, the RMC Research & Education Foundation was founded with a modest ambition: To fund the purchase of a million-pound testing machine at the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association’s (NRMCA) A.H. Smith Research Laboratory in College Park, Md. Industry leaders at the time established the Foundation as a non-profit charitable organization in order take in tax-deductible donations for the purchase. Little did they envision the long-term impact their action would have on a theretofore woefully underfunded ready mixed concrete industry.

The short-term original goal was quickly met, and the million-pound testing machine was purchased. In fact, that piece of equipment is still a valuable resource used in NRMCA’s lab today. Throughout the 1990s, the Foundation continued to serve as a funding vehicle with subsequent campaigns and investments in the ground-breaking NRMCA Certified Concrete Sales Professional Program and development of the landmark Concrete Industry Management undergraduate degree program.

These additional programs demonstrated the need and value in investing in research and education programs to keep the industry on the cutting edge. This value proposition led to another critical decision in 1999, when industry visionaries determined to grow an endowment and establish the Foundation as a long-term industry asset. By having an endowment, the Foundation is now able to take both a longer-term perspective with funding and management of industry resources, and at the same time be nimble to pivot and support programs that meet the challenges and opportunities at hand. This has been especially important in the era of Covid-19, and with the industry’s current existential fight on embodied carbon perceptions and accounting integrity surrounding portland cement-based products. The Foundation’s endowment gives it a unique position among our industry organizations in that it can fund vital research and education regardless of the current climate, to bear fruit in both good times and bad, and for generations to come.

FEATURE

MAJOR MILESTONES

• 1991 – Established as a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization with singular project goal.
• Mid-1990s – Raised and invested funds for NRMCA Certified Concrete Sales Professional (1993) and Concrete Industry Management (CIM) Undergraduate Degree (1995) programs.
• 1999 – Vision to build an endowment as a lasting resource.
• 2004 – Full-time personnel; increased emphasis on fundraising.
• 2009 – Established MIT Concrete Sustainability Hub.
• 2016 – Secured $3 million pledge from the Troesh Family Foundation, began Troesh matching gift campaign.
• 2018 – Achieved $9 million in industry fundraising commitments for required 3:1 Troesh gift match.
• 2020 – $25 million Foundation endowment threshold reached.
• 2021 and Beyond – Preserve and continue to build endowment as a lasting industry resource; seed greater innovation and investment in the concrete industry, meet challenges and capitalize on industry opportunities ahead.

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

In the 30 years since its formation, the RMC Research & Education Foundation has advanced the quality, professionalism and sustainability of the ready mixed concrete industry by funding and implementing research and programs in the areas of sustainability, health and safety, concrete applications, plus recruitment, education and training. And with these resources, it has an impressive track record of achieving quantifiable results.

The RMC Research & Education Foundation measures the implementation and value of its programs in a variety of ways. The ideal gauge of success is being able to quantify dollars saved to the industry, or increased opportunities created through use of its programs by partner organizations to expand market share. However, other key indicators the Foundation uses to track the progress of its programs include adoption by codes and standards setting bodies or rating systems, number of participants in education programs, surveys and approval ratings, leveraged resources, earned media articles, acceptance into journal publications, social media and website hits, and case studies. The Foundation makes it a point to measure each of its programs by at least one, if not several of these key indicators.

Understanding a clear pathway to industry implementation and alignment with industry priorities are also essential to a project getting approved by the Foundation for funding. This is where working closely with partner organizations comes in. The Foundation’s strategic plan is directly tied to the goals and measures of its sister organization, NRMCA. It is also by extension tied to the goals of NRMCA’s alliance partners, the Portland Cement Association and American Concrete Pavement Association.

A specific example of this industry collaboration began in 2009, when the RMC Research & Education Foundation partnered with PCA to establish the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Concrete Sustainability Hub (MIT CShub). This relationship has rapidly accelerated the industry’s progress in the areas of sustainability and resilience. MIT CShub research and tools are being implemented in the industry’s response to embodied carbon, a factor of increasing consequence in structural and architectural specifications. They are also providing credible data to support major industry initiatives such as NRMCA-aligned Build With Strength and Pave Ahead coalitions, influencing policy and project decisions throughout the country and around the world.

The Foundation’s education and training tools and research deliverables are helping producers meet the challenges of today. However, questions like how to deal with embodied carbon transparency or recruit a qualified workforce make it clear that the industry’s work is just beginning.

So what’s next for the Foundation? We’re at a pivotal time for the concrete industry. Disruption to our old ways of doing business is already happening. We are facing new challenges and opportunities with climate change, resilience, workforce and productivity, and increasing market pressures. As an industry, we have the chance to “disrupt” ourselves by embracing new technology, or to be disrupted by others like legislators, regulators and other industries. With the resources of the RMC Research & Education Foundation, and partnerships like the one with the MIT Concrete Sustainability

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Hub, we are able to take charge of our own destiny and attract and
seed innovation investment in the ready mixed concrete industry.
However, it will require a coordinated, industry-wide response.

With a robust endowment, strong leadership on its Board of
Trustees, and collaboration with industry organizations at the local,
national and international level, the RMC Research & Education Foun-
dation is poised to help advance the ready mixed concrete industry
into the next era of greatness. To join other industry leaders with
your support, or to find out more about the Foundation’s programs
and progress, visit www.rmc-foundation.org.

Julie Garbini is executive director of the RMC Research & Education
Foundation, Alexandria, Va.

A RECORD OF SOLID RESULTS
Three decades of RMC Research & Education Foundation deliverables sup-
porting ready mixed concrete producers and their customers:

• MIT CSHub and other buildings-related research supporting Build With
Strength and concrete’s 15 percent increase in market share for
buildings since 2016, with 320 projects converted and 888 consulted.

• Driver recruitment video Day in the Life of a Mixer Driver has nearly
77,000 views on YouTube (averaging more than 1K views/month).

• More than 3,000 employees trained through NRMCA’s Online Safety
Series, many of the titles of which were funded by the Foundation.

• NRMCA’s Plant Manager Certification has trained more than 2,000
employees through its Foundation-funded curriculum.

• Over 1,700 YouTube views of Concrete Plant Safety Video.

• More than 1,400 graduates of the Concrete Industry Management
(CIM) Undergraduate Degree Program; RMC provided the seed funding
for CIM and continues to be its largest donor organization; CIM is
expanding to its fifth university this year, South Dakota State, joining
Middle Tennessee State University, California State University Chico, New
Jersey Institute of Technology and Texas State University.

• Guide to Concrete Overlays – 112,000 cubic yards converted; a value
of $28.6 million to the concrete construction industry and $12.4
million to the ready mixed concrete industry.

• Guide to Concrete Trails – state training; webinars/presentations; Over
1,000 copies distributed and project successes in multiple states.

• PavementDesigner.org has over 57,400 design runs completed, with
use evident in every U.S. state and internationally.

• Crushed Concrete Aggregate study: Savings of approximately $300
million annually in materials and disposal costs through the reuse
of crushed concrete as aggregate.

• Reduced Permitting fees for transit mixed plants of approximately
25 percent based on the Air Emissions study data adopted into EPA
AP-42.

• Savings of $63 million in compliance costs, per Occupational Safety
and Health Administration estimates, with exemption from OSHA’s
Hexavalent Chromium rule achieved with data from Hexavalent Chro-
mium Exposure study.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED
Leave your legacy to future generations of industry leaders and join
us in continuing to grow this vital industry resource. Visit the Foun-
dation’s website at www.rmc-foundation.org/contribute to make a
secure, tax-deductible contribution online. You can also download a
pledge form to make a long-term commitment. Pledges are recognized
in full at the time they are made, but may be paid on a schedule of
your choosing. The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.
Federal Tax ID 52-1680963.

You can also access the RMC Research & Education Foundation’s free
resources, view current contributor lists, submit a funding proposal,
and more from the Foundation’s home page at www.rmc-foundation.org.