

Career Profile: Professional Surveyor

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This is the fourth article in my series of profiles on career opportunities, selected from a workshop I attended entitled “Careers Your Students Need to Know About” at the 2017 ASCA conference. The session on surveyors was sponsored by the National Society of Professional Surveyors. This month’s piece includes an overview of a Professional Surveyor, as well as a complementary career path as a surveying technician.

Another career that students may not be exposed to often is a Professional Surveyor. Although we may not think of this industry often, we are impacted every day by the work that is done by individuals in this field. Professional Surveyors are responsible for measuring boundaries -- land, water, and air space! Preparation for this career typically requires a bachelor’s degree and a license.

The first thing that often comes to mind when thinking of a surveyor is property boundaries. While this is certainly a service provided by professional surveyors, there are a variety of land-related services that also fall to these individuals, such as subdivision of land, topographic maps, and maps for flood insurance (an issue that can be costly for property owners in various regions). A task that may not be well known is hydrographic mapping, which is mapping the topography underwater.

We all benefit from the services provided by Professional Surveyors. People often associate the career with the role it plays in the selling and/or purchasing of property. Real estate agents, attorneys, and loan of-

ficers rely on the measuring of property done by surveyors. It is more than just identifying the lines of the property. Their expertise is needed to identify potential issues with the property, like whether or not it is in or near a flood zone. Additionally, a Professional Surveyor can identify features that are on your land or the land you wish to purchase, such as a fence or a driveway, or even a pool.

Professionals involved in developing land or the division of land -- from architects to engineers -- depend on the work of Professional Surveyors. Locating potential impediments to development is one of the tasks involved. Impediments could be wetlands, easements, accessways, and others. While the surveyor may not always determine if these exist, it is their responsibility to identify the location of such impediments as they relate to other features on the land and to the property lines itself. Since some surveyors have the expertise necessary to do both, it is important to ask whether the individual will be responsible for identifying impediments or just locating them using information provided by someone else.

When projects are underway, there are many professionals that are involved. However, it is the Professional Surveyor that is involved from the start to the finish -- from verifying property lines and size to determining that the features have been constructed in the right locations.

Students are always interested in whether a particular career will afford them the lifestyle they imagine for themselves. The median income

for Professional Surveyors in Massachusetts is \$58,000, just shy of the national figure. However, it is important to inform students that this is a very small career, employing 716 people in Massachusetts. The field is declining, as automation allows surveyors to do more work in less time.

The Massachusetts Career Information System suggests a major of Engineering or Surveying Technology as preparation for this career. I could not find Surveying Technology as a major at any Massachusetts colleges, but Surveying Engineering Technology is offered at the University of Maine, and Massachusetts students are eligible for this program at a reduced cost through the New England Board of Higher Education Regional Student Program.

As previously stated, Professional Surveyors typically have a four-year degree and a license. However, individuals wishing to work as technicians in this field can enter the industry with a high school diploma and begin on the job training. Some may pursue post-high school training in survey technology. Mapping technicians generally require post-secondary education in technology such as GIS. The Community College of Rhode Island offers an Associate’s Degree in Surveying Technology.

Interestingly enough, the median income for surveying and mapping technicians in Massachusetts is only about \$6000 less annually compared to surveyors, but the high end of the salary range for technicians in Massachusetts is over \$25,000 less

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