After two years of construction, a brand-new house built by students in the Utah State University construction technology and management program is nearly ready for sale.

Students in the program gain experience working with architectural drawings, floor layout, wall and roofing systems, siding application, soffit and fascia applications, and the installation of windows, doors, stairs, and interior trim. Students also learn construction site safety and have the option of learning how to operate heavy machinery such as skid-steer loaders.

Roy Yoakam, building construction instructor at USU, describes the program as an excellent opportunity to gain real-world, hands-on experience.

"It still really is like training a new employee," said Yoakam. "Except we have the time and the setting to make sure our students are actually understanding the concepts."

Students participating in the building construction program learn concepts in a classroom setting which are then applied during hands-on training at the building site. In just two semesters, students can earn a certificate of completion which helps them immediately enter the workforce. Students can also opt to apply those credits toward an associate degree and continue their education.

"In 2016, USU Blanding began restructuring the building construction program and curriculum," said Justin Bergeman, associate professor and director of career and technical education at USU Blanding. "We increased the house project from one year to two. We found this change enhanced student learning by allowing the students and instructors to work on 'the Why?' things are done, and not just going through the motions to complete them."

According to Bergeman, the extra time spent on concepts gives students a more complete understanding of the principles of construction. Since teaching and learning are the driving factors behind the building program, instructors are able to spend time building student skills and confidence.

"The program has really developed into the ideal construction program for the area we serve and offers a great deal of knowledge and experience for the students," said Bergeman. "Our philosophy is if the students are not successful then we are not successful."

The student-built house project is an ongoing experience for USU students. The current house, for which construction began in fall 2019, will be placed on the market soon. Proceeds from the sale will fund the next construction project. A new home construction project has already begun with plans to complete it over the course of four semesters.

Lynnea Willie, a graduate of the certificate program, participated in the most recent home construction project.

"I'm good with my hands, obviously," Willie said. "Just recently I fixed up my great-grandma's house, and found out I really want to do that and just give back more to the community. As soon as I started to put myself out there, I started trying new things, and I started to get the hang of it, and Roy helped encourage me more."

To learn more about the construction technology and management program and educational opportunities at USU Blanding, visit statewide.usu.edu/Blanding/degrees or contact Heidi Swenson, academic advisor, by emailing Heidi.Swenson@usu.edu or calling (435) 678-8115.
USU Blanding Students Build House, Skills, and Confidence through Construction Certificate Program | Blanding

USU professors Roy Yoakam and Justin Bergeman, along with student Lynnea Willie, stand on the deck of a nearly-completed student-built home that will be for sale in Blanding. The house was constructed by students in the construction technology and management program.

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