

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

AT COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

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Heidi Mechtenberg Reflects on 30+ years with FM

My CSU undergraduate degree was in Interior Design with a minor in Construction Management. During my undergraduate exposure to construction management, I started leaning more toward Facilities Management. When I finished my studies, the only jobs in interior design were in sales for office furniture companies that did open office cubicle arrangements on the east or west coast. That wasn't entirely appealing, so I decided to do a CSU Master's program in Marketing to gain additional skills.

During that coursework, I got an internship with the City of Loveland Light and Power. Part of my job was working with an energy management software called Faser. In 1990 I took my first job for CSU Facilities as a student employee, working for John Morris and Steve Hultin, mechanical engineers at the time. I was hired because I could work in Faser, had construction drafting skills, and some project management exposure. One of my first on-site jobs as a Facilities employee was monitoring the concrete pour for the Chill Radome out by Greeley. Eighteen concrete trucks came through and I had to perform a slump test on each batch. It felt like a big test and was a bit intimidating being young and the only woman on the job site!

Early on I also clamored around many rooftops collecting nameplate information off chillers and cooling towers. I wore skorts to accomplish the job since it was summer and this was at a time when women were still expected to wear a dress or skirt in the office. My bosses were told my attire was inappropriate by the older women in the office. It was difficult to accommodate both the dress protocol and perform the job duties as assigned.

After graduating with my master's degree, the jobs in my field were still on the coasts. I really enjoyed my work at Facilities and could see the responsibilities expanding. In fact, my student job was changed into a full-time position. I stayed, got married, and started that position in 1993. That puts me at FM for 31 years in total. I've physically moved my work area throughout the whole FM North building. When I had my first child in 1996, I continued working—half time. I gave up the project management side of the job and continued with the utility work. This included developing the



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purchased utility budget for the University, as well as for other auxiliary customers. I also helped develop a tool we call “The New Facilities Report.” It’s an important tool to request FM operating funds for new buildings. I work with a lot of numbers and many variables, so the job is never boring.

I’ve always managed one or more student employees during my time at FM. It is gratifying to see them grow and become more confident in their skills and abilities. We show them a side of university operations not always obvious with utility work, and expose them to energy conservation, water quality, and environmental efforts that care for CSU—that and lots of data entry.



Susanne Cordery (Left) and Heidi Mechtenberg (Right) - Earth Day 2018

I resumed full-time work in 2017. I now manage the meter shop, in addition to my regular work. I’ve become involved with more budget and some contract work. We’ve also recently completed recommissioning our utility database, once called Faser, now called EnergyCAP.

I’ve attended plenty of meetings where I was one of a few or the only woman in the group in non-FM situations, and it can feel awkward. But I’ve always worked with the engineering side of FM operations and they have been supportive of the women at

FM—and of me, specifically. In the last 22 years when I moved to the east side of FM North, I have had more exposure to the trades, and as a group they also make me feel valued. I have been with the Utilities group for about a decade, and while I am the only woman on the team, I have never felt out of place or uncomfortable. I am grateful to have had that kind of support all these years.

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