



CELEBRATING
55 YEARS

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2022 Women in Construction: Jess Baccari, Project Manager at Siena Construction

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Jess Baccari

What was your greatest professional achievement or most notable project in the last 12 months? A notable project that we're "building" at Siena is a new Training Excellence and Mentorship Program (TEAMS) for assistant project managers. It's been rewarding to help create the program to provide support and learning opportunities for younger staff. Mentorship is a passion of mine. I would suggest that everyone try to find a way to "lead from where you are at" and help those around you thrive. A notable Siena construction project that I was involved with recently was an office-to-lab conversion at The Broad Institute in support of their COVID research. The project was designed and constructed in four weeks during a time when material shortages were a real issue. Everyone worked together and tackled some challenging design and construction hurdles.

When you're not busy, what is your go to book or podcast to help you unwind? My go-to hobby to unplug and unwind is to work out. I'm loving Tunde Oyeyin's classes on Peloton. These days, reading consists of Good Night Moon, The Very Hungry Caterpillar, and Good Night Beach on repeat with my daughter.

Starting out in the construction business, who or what empowered you? I'm a licensed architect and switched over to construction after 10 years of practicing architecture. The people in the architecture world were wonderful and I miss them as colleagues. However, I knew I needed to make a change. I participated in the Boston Society of Architects Mid-Career Mentorship Program and spent a year figuring out my next steps. I asked a lot of people out to coffee and spoke to them about their careers, what they liked and didn't like about their jobs. Construction wasn't on the front of my mind as a next step. However, my brother Andy – who is a Project Manager at Siena Construction – had been telling me that my strengths would pair well with the industry and at Siena. I finally listened to him and added Siena's President Terry Hayes to my ongoing list of coffee dates. Our conversation intrigued me, and a few weeks later I spent a day shadowing a Project Manager. I started at Siena shortly after that. I love the challenge of existing conditions: the difficult logistics and phasing of a project within an occupied building. I also love building relationships with clients, subcontractors, and colleagues.

Within your firm, who has helped you succeed within the industry? How have they helped you? Everyone at Siena has taught me something and helped me succeed in some way. Siena is a wonderful family-like environment. Someone is always there to answer a technical question, provide support on a project, be your personal cheerleader, have lunch with, deliver materials to the site, or pitch in wherever it's needed. I'm grateful for everyone in our office and in the field.

What tips or advice would you offer to other women who are considering entering the construction industry? Get excited for a fun ride! Ask a TON of questions. Ask people you admire to coffee. Start your network young but be authentic. Find a niche within the industry you are passionate about. Create your own support network of people who think differently than you do. Have the confidence to speak up. Fake it 'til you make it. Be honest. Be your own advocate. Put in the hard work.