



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

Jacqueline Crenca Hinman '83



To Jacqueline Crenca Hinman for her professional accomplishments in the field of engineering and for her commitment to diversity in the workplace.

Jacque Hinman decided she wanted to be an environmental engineer while still in high school. Three Mile Island, Love Canal, and the threat of a possible landfill site near her Maryland childhood home were all important issues during that era and the driving force for her choice of major. She not only wanted to join the growing environmental activism, but also contribute solutions. She was accepted to prestigious engineering schools including Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and Rutgers University; many offered full scholarships. But when the acceptance letter arrived from Penn State, she was all in. Why Penn State? Because it offered “the best engineering program at that time,” Hinman said. Environmental engineering was new and not widely offered elsewhere, especially as a bachelor’s degree. For her, equally important to the self-proclaimed college football fanatic: Penn State had great football. “Ready to be in the strike zone,” reminisced Hinman, referring to the 1982 national championship football team.

Hinman has more than 30 years in the engineering and construction business. She is chair and CEO of CH2M HILL, a global leader in engineering consulting, design, design-build, operations, and program management. The firm, headquartered in Denver, Colo., employs approximately 26,000 people worldwide. Hinman claims hard work and “a little skill and a little luck” helped her reach that top rung of the corporate ladder in a traditionally male-dominated industry. She is the only female CEO of a Fortune 500 engineering and construction company.

Hinman began her fast-tracked career by interning at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Not long after graduation, she managed hazardous waste cleanup and landfill projects in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. With only five years of employment under her engineering and construction hat, Hinman realized that navigating through a male-dominated industry was a skill in-and-of itself.

“The biggest thing I learned was probably working a little bit extra, being helpful, not being confrontational, and using what turned out to be pretty good communication and leadership skills to broker solutions.”

Hinman has spent the majority of her career with CH2M HILL, joining the firm in 1988. She has held numerous top-level management positions and was a key executive in many of its highest-profile projects, including three projects of which she’s most proud: the design and construction of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games; the expansion of the Panama Canal; and Masdar, Abu Dhabi—the world’s first sustainable city.

“These projects were symbols of helping to make a difference in the world and around the world. For that I’ll always be grateful that I learned so much.

“Most of my employees come to work every day because they’re making a difference: clean drinking water, better transportation, and sustainable energy and facilities. It really is about laying the foundation for human progress. That’s what we’re all about,” said Hinman.

CH2M HILL is a company where diversity matters, she said. It’s the only engineering and construction firm to win the prestigious Catalyst award, which honors exceptional initiatives from companies that support and advance women in business.

Under Hinman’s leadership, approximately 31 percent of CH2M’s employees are women, 21 percent of the engineers and project managers are female, and the make-up of the board of directors is 33 percent women. “Women comprise only about 11 percent of the engineering workforce in the U.S. today, and even less outside the U.S. That’s why our numbers are so striking, considering that we have nearly 26,000 employees worldwide,” Hinman explained.

The legacy Hinman wants to leave behind is not only that she made it to the top of the corporate ladder as CEO of CH2M HILL, but also that she’s leading a corporation to be the best with regard to corporate citizenship including diversity, improved worker welfare globally, sustainability, and high ethical and moral standards. In so doing, she and CH2M HILL are making a tremendous difference in the lives of others. In her words, “Being the best for the world.”

Hinman is a member of the Penn State Alumni Association. Her husband, George, is a University of Nebraska graduate, so Big Ten football looms large in their household on Saturdays. They live in Englewood, Colo., with their Australian Cattle rescue dog, Rachel.