

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

SPITZER SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

CONCRETE MASONRY EDUCATION DAY

SUMMARY

The Concrete Masonry Checkoff partnered with the City College of New York's (CCNY) Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture to bring concrete masonry directly into the studio. Through a hands-on design-build experience and the Green Wall System Design Competition, students explored the structural, aesthetic and sustainable potential of masonry in ways traditional coursework rarely allows.

With support from local producers and partners including Glenwood Mason Supply, Westbrook Concrete Block, SRM Concrete, Associated Brick Mason Contractors of Greater New York, and the Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 1, NY and Long Island, students gained real-world insight into materials, constructability and the collaboration required in professional practice.

Over the semester, fourth- and fifth-year students moved from concept to construction, developing full-scale designs, working alongside union masons and gaining nearly 5,000 hours of real-world building experience. Their final built work was showcased on campus, giving the CCNY community a firsthand look at the beauty and craft of concrete masonry.

Faculty leadership played a key role throughout the semester, with Associate Professor Christian Volkmann and Adjunct Professor Steve Preston coordinating student progress and guiding the work from concept through construction.



Images courtesy of the Spitzer School of Architecture faculty and students

RESULTS

The partnership created two standout educational experiences:

- Concrete Masonry Day, where 14 students unveiled early concepts for the Green Wall competition.
- A culminating exhibition, where completed student-built designs were presented and winning teams announced.

Students strengthened their communication with trades, developed technical confidence and learned how masonry performs at full scale. The program also produced lasting educational assets including photos, videos, assignments and student booklets that will support ongoing masonry instruction.



Images courtesy of the Spitzer School of Architecture faculty and students



IMPACT

The collaboration brought industry into the studio and showed students what is possible when masonry is fully integrated into the design process. Guided by faculty and supported by skilled trades, students deepened their understanding of structure, detailing, constructability and real-world collaboration, gaining confidence that extends beyond the classroom.

The installation displayed on campus for several months, and still presently on exhibit, allowed students, faculty and visitors to see the results of the program, reinforcing the value of experiential learning.



FUTURE OUTLOOK

Building on the success of this project, a similar design-build experience is planned for the Spring 2026 semester, supported by the same industry partners and stakeholders. Continued collaboration between faculty, producers, contractors and students will ensure hands-on masonry education remains a core part of the studio experience. The Checkoff remains committed to supporting programs that introduce young architects to concrete masonry early, building long-term appreciation for the craft and strengthening industry-academic collaboration.

For additional inquiries or site visit requests, please contact
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BY THE NUMBERS

~5,000 student hours dedicated to masonry design + construction

1 architectural course fully integrated with masonry instruction

Multiple curriculum assets created, including photos, videos, a student booklet and design assignments

1 campus installation on public display

5 industry partners involved

- Glenwood Masonry Supply
- Westbrook Concrete Block
- SRM Concrete
- Associated Brick Mason Contractors of Greater New York
- BAC Local 1, NY & Long Island and Labor Management Committee

14 students participated

\$36,000 invested in education + research