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Lessons in Surveying

The lesson of the month is that every project has challenges to turn into possibilities and achievements. This month's assignment was a topographic survey of the block between the two main areas of Bates' downtown campus. Upon assignment, it seemed pretty straight forward. But as I've learned over the last five quarters, nothing is what it seems in surveying.

In this case, research became one of the challenges. The original plat was the only information available on-line until we discovered that the school acquired the street through a process called "vacation". This means that the City of Tacoma had to relinquish their interest in the right of way that delineated the street. With a few phone calls and a trip to the County Auditor's Office, the challenge was met and possibility became the new motivator.

The next challenge came in the form of using GPS equipment to perform an operation that was new to us. This brought on the challenge of having to define and communicate technical issues, and work through a customer service department for assistance and resolution. This is different from being on a job where you are rushed to get the problem solved because each day costs money. In our classroom environment, patience and support are the rule rather than the exception.

At this juncture, all the information has been gathered. Plans are being made to do the post processing of the information: creating the drawings, writing the legal descriptions and recording the documents that make up the survey. I'm sure this will bring more challenges along with more opportunities for greater achievements. As always, I look forward to this next step with some nervousness, some fear, and a great deal of excitement!