

Caitlyn Olson

Intern at SMBH Inc.

Student at University of Dayton

15 July 2022

NCSEA 2022 Young Member Summit Scholarship

Given the responsibility to recruit students and recent graduates to participate with the Structural Engineers Association, I would begin my focus at the collegiate level. Supporting and mentoring current students allows them to follow their passions to connect, learn, and grow within the structural engineering discipline. Once current students graduate, this participation continues into professional development within their career. This allows for an easy transition of recent graduates to seek a similar group, such as local Young Members Groups within SEA. Additionally, companies may be able to recruit their recent graduates employees via colleagues who participate within the Structural Engineers Association.

Based on my personal experience of involvement within the Structural Engineers Association, I can attest to the transition of involvement from current students to recent graduates. Currently, I am a fifth-year senior at the University of Dayton, planning to graduate this fall. My involvement with SEA began while one of my peers was attempting to bring the Structural Engineers Association of Ohio's Dayton Student Chapter back from its diminishing presence on campus. The chapter had become inactive due to members graduating as well as the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Once student organizations began returning to normal activities this past fall, this fellow peer held a meeting to discuss a strategy for reigniting the Dayton chapter. Over the

course of the meeting, we decided to plan meetings with industry professionals and organize networking events for structural engineering students on campus. One of these meetings became the primary event which sparked my interest about the Structural Engineers Association. The event was a presentation where young structural engineering professionals discussed their transition from being a student to a practicing engineer. This event was a great example of the type of SEA sponsored event that can inform and inspire current students! Although the seminar had low attendance, those of us who were there gained valuable information from the presenters which will help us as we transition into our own engineering careers. I greatly appreciate my fellow peer for his work and leadership to bring back an organization that he was passionate about. Although he has since graduated, his passion remains with the chapter as we continue to build.

This fall, I will be stepping into the role of Interim President for the SEAoO Dayton Student Chapter. Although I only have one more semester until graduation, my goal is to aid the transition between semesters, continue building Dayton's chapter in the footsteps of the previous President, and foster the next generation of students passionate about structural engineering. I am excited to plan a variety of different events and provide resources for these students, and I hope that this will help to increase our membership! One idea I am particularly excited about is a seminar event that will bring University of Dayton alumni back to campus to talk about their experiences in the structural engineering industry. Ideally, this would include both recent graduates and those who have been professionals for over a decade. This event would help connect different generations of Dayton alumni together and hopefully spark

students' interest about the Structural Engineers Association the same way my first event did for me!

Currently, I am working as a summer intern for SMBH Inc., a structural engineering company based out of Columbus, OH. Throughout my work at SMBH, I have attended various NCSEA seminars to expand my education of structural engineering. I am looking forward to growing my involvement within the Structural Engineers Association through my transition from student to recent graduate and young professional. One way I anticipate doing this is by participating in SEAO events and my local Young Members Group, where I will help the leadership team implement ideas like the ones I have mentioned.

Returning to the broader responsibility of recruiting young professionals to participate with the Structural Engineers Association, I would employ three strategic goals to increase participation as well as membership. The first goal would be to increase membership and membership relations by recruiting through a variety of networks. As previously mentioned, recruiting at the collegiate level is a great place to start, but it cannot stop there. Continuing the recruiting process towards company or employers can also lead younger professionals to joining SEA. An additional point of contact are current members of the Structural Engineers Association. By encouraging current SEA members to recruit current students and recent graduates, more information about the organization can be spread through networking! This is also a good time to highlight the important impact that inspiring professors and industry mentors have on those expanding their professional development.

Another strategy that I would employ to encourage my fellow peers to participate with the Structural Engineers Association would be socialization and networking development. By not only increasing the number of events but also the variety of event types, current and future members can look forward to participating with SEA. This is an important aspect to sustaining membership and participation within any organization, especially SEA. The variety of different events could include professional development or networking events, fun and social outings or competitions, and informative and educational lectures, demonstrations, or tours. Professional development through networking events help to connect and socialize those outside of one's company. They also expand the connections for one's company for new technologies within the field or informative resources.

Both previous goals can aid in the development of my third strategic goal to not only increase participation of young professionals, but rather develop them into leadership roles within the Structural Engineers Association. Through the process of becoming a member, participant, to then leader, others look up to their fellow peers for mentorship, guidance, and support. This allows the person in the leadership role to pass down their passion for structural engineering to inspire the next generation!

To conclude, I want to emphasize the importance of recruiting students and recent graduates to get involved with the Structural Engineers Association for the organization and the advancement of the industry through connections and the expansion of knowledge within the profession.