

Recognizing the significance of students and young graduates as the future of our industry, it is crucial to ensure they are aware of the supportive community available to them for guidance and assistance. With this in mind, I would begin by sharing my personal experience of involvement in the Structural Engineering Association (SEA) and the numerous benefits it has provided, including networking opportunities, professional development resources, and mentorship.

During my academic years, I actively participated in the ASCE student chapter at my university, an experience that initially seemed intimidating as I navigated through the unfamiliar territory of meeting fellow students in my field. As an introverted individual, this was particularly challenging for me. However, the warm reception and willingness of others to offer help and support made the transition much easier. Engaging in various enjoyable activities and gaining access to webinars conducted by industry experts not only facilitated my professional growth but also provided valuable networking opportunities.

Throughout my college journey, I discovered an ASCE student scholarship to attend the Structures Congress. Although my initial application was disrupted by the unforeseen circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, I eventually had the opportunity to attend in the following year. The experience was both wonderful and intimidating. However, it is worth noting that I cannot recall how I stumbled upon these opportunities for students and young members. Establishing a strong and prominent presence would undoubtedly enhance our ability to reach students who may otherwise have limited means of discovering such valuable opportunities, especially in the age of technology. Implementing targeted marketing campaigns and fostering collaborations with academic institutions would ensure that students receive timely information about upcoming events, scholarship opportunities, mentorship programs, and more.

One aspect that I, unfortunately, did not have the chance to pursue but deeply desire is shadowing. It is highly beneficial for students to gain exposure to real-life practices, experience various types of work, acquire essential skills for success in the field, and understand the professional liability within our industry. Therefore, I would actively collaborate with industry partners to provide shadowing opportunities to students at the earliest stages of their academic journey. Additionally, sharing these experiences through social media platforms in the form of podcasts or "A day in the life of" videos would further engage students and generate interest in the field.

During one of the webinars I attended as a student, a speaker briefly mentioned the importance of finding a mentor to succeed in the job search process. As an international student, adapting to the U.S. job market and learning how to create an effective resume seemed like a daunting task. I did not have a mentor and felt lost in the process. Although I reached out to the speaker to request mentorship, it unfortunately did not materialize. It is crucial to acknowledge that the efforts made by students and recent graduates go in vain if we, as professionals, do not reciprocate when we have the opportunity. Giving back and becoming

mentors ourselves is of utmost importance. By providing guidance and support to students and recent graduates, we can ensure a bright future for our industry.

In conclusion, by sharing personal experiences, promoting opportunities through targeted marketing and academic collaborations, providing shadowing experiences, and offering mentorship, we can actively engage students and young graduates, guiding them towards a successful career in structural engineering and securing a promising future for our industry.