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What first interested you about the steel industry?
I was applying for internships for the summer before graduation and received an offer for the meltshop at Gerdau Special Steel North America Fort Smith Mill. I had never been exposed to steelmaking before but had experience in heavy industrial environments. From my first steps onto the electric arc furnace (EAF) deck and the strike of an arc, I was hooked; the immense power behind the EAF was like nothing I had seen before.

Describe the coursework and degrees that you have obtained. Have any AIST programs assisted with your career advancement?
I received my bachelor’s degree in ceramic engineering from Missouri University of Science and Technology in 2021. I did not attend any AIST events until my career out of college, but the two events I have attended since joining AM/NS Calvert, Modern Electric Furnace Steelmaking and Secondary Steelmaking Refractories, have taught me about intricacies of steelmaking that I never knew before.

What has been the biggest benefit of being involved in AIST as a Young Professional?
AIST is full of professionals from all stages of careers, aspects of the steel industry and walks of life. The networking opportunities are endless, so it is more than likely someone else has been in a similar position and can offer a word of advice. As a Young Professional, it’s not always easy to understand an issue, so being able to reach out to a network of professionals is an awesome way to learn from your peers.

Have you had any mentors that have assisted with your career development so far?
My biggest mentor so far was matched with me through a program with the American Ceramic Society and has been incredibly helpful navigating my early career. She has helped me understand how to maneuver complicated situations and increase my confidence in my ability and knowledge as an engineer. There also are strong women in the refractory world who have been mentors by coaching me on material practices and lining failure cause analysis.

What advice do you have for students who are curious about pursuing something related to the steel industry?
The steel industry is huge; opportunity is out there, especially for new generations of steelmakers. Don’t be afraid to try something and not like it because there are a hundred other positions throughout the mill that could be your niche.

What do you find unique and interesting about the steel industry? What do you enjoy most about it?
Innovation throughout steelmaking is the most interesting part of the industry. The challenge of reducing the steelmaking carbon footprint has created technological innovations such as the molten oxide electrolysis method of steelmaking, refractory materials that need shorter pre-heat times to reduce natural gas usage, new ways of recycling previously unrecyclable refractories, and small nuclear reactors to power mills, just to name a few. The best part of the industry evolving is that every day presents a new challenge, so things stay interesting!

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