



# AIST Young Professionals



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## What first interested you about learning more about the steel industry?

My first exposure to steelmaking came when I began my professional career with iba America, supporting customers in the industry. Since then, I've had the opportunity to travel the country and visit many different steel mills. I've witnessed and supported a wide range of processes from melting and casting to rolling and finishing. The sheer scale of the equipment and materials never fails to amaze me. It is almost mesmerizing at times watching the red-hot steel traverse through the mill. I am truly thankful to be a part of such a vital and unique industry.

## Describe the coursework and degrees that you have obtained. Did you participate in any of AIST's programs or attend AIST events as a student?

I earned my bachelor's degree in industrial and systems engineering from Auburn University in 2020. My coursework covered a wide range of topics including mathematics, manufacturing systems, programming and physics, but it ultimately provided me

with the foundations for critical thinking and problem-solving that are required in the steel industry. Although I did not attend any AIST events as a student, I now see how valuable those experiences can be. I would strongly encourage any students who are interested in the steel industry to jump in, build a network and broaden their understanding of an industry that truly has a lot to offer.

## Have any AIST programs assisted with your career advancement?

AIST has certainly played a big role in my career. I have attended the AISTech conference for the last 5 years where I assist my company in exhibiting, but I think the real value comes from attending the training events and getting involved in the Technology Committees. I have attended the Digital Transformation Forums, various Member Chapter meetings, and the Long Products Rolling Training Seminar. I also had the opportunity to present at the Industrial Automation and Control System Fundamentals course. These programs are a great way for young professionals to get up to speed with the current state of the industry and stay informed about the latest technologies and trends. I currently serve as the Young Professional chair on the Digitalization Applications Technology Committee where our mission is to promote the understanding and advancement of appropriate digitalization applications, architectures and technologies for the processing of steel. I highly encourage others in the industry to get involved with AIST committees. It is a great way to grow both technically and professionally.

## As a young professional, what have been the most valuable benefits of your involvement with AIST?

AIST provides countless opportunities to build a network and community of open-minded individuals who share a common goal of advancing the steel industry. That sense of connection is especially valuable for a young professional who might be jumping into an unfamiliar, and at times intimidating, environment. I learned early on to say "yes" to new opportunities that come my way and to understand that you only get out what you put in. That mindset has helped grow my confidence over the years and made me more comfortable working alongside people who often have decades more experience. AIST also creates space to learn directly from seasoned professionals who are typically more than willing to share their knowledge and experience.

## Have you had any mentors that have assisted with your career development so far? If so, how did you identify them as a mentor, and what impact have they made thus far?

Yes, I've been fortunate to have several mentors who have helped shape my career so far. Some I identified naturally through working closely with them. These are people who not

only had deep technical knowledge, but who also took the time to explain the “why” behind what we were doing. Their willingness to share insights and offer guidance made a big impact early on, especially as I was learning about the steel industry from a very low baseline. I’ve also found that simply asking questions and showing genuine curiosity opens the door to mentorship. The more you engage, the more people are willing to support and invest in your growth. These mentors have helped me build confidence, grow my technical skills and navigate the challenges that come with working in such a dynamic and fast-paced environment.

### What advice do you have for students who are curious about pursuing something related to the steel industry?

Explore it with an open mind. Admittedly, the steel industry wasn’t on my radar when I was in college. However, I quickly found that the industry is full of wonderful, down-to-earth people who are passionate about what they do and always willing to share their knowledge. The industry offers endless opportunities to innovate, especially as new technologies continue to shape the way steel is produced and used. Every day presents new challenges, and there’s often a chance to get your hands dirty, which makes the work very rewarding. There’s

something incredibly fulfilling about contributing to an industry that quite literally builds the world. Take the time to research the different paths within steel, and don’t hesitate to reach out to AIST or industry professionals. Asking questions and showing curiosity is one of the best ways to learn and find where you fit.

### What do you find unique and interesting about the steel industry? What do you enjoy the most about it?

The most unique and interesting part about the steel industry is the combination of tradition and innovation. You’re working with processes that have been refined over centuries, yet there’s still constant evolution through new technologies, automation and data-driven decision-making. At iba America, I support automation, data acquisition, and analysis that help steelmakers improve quality, efficiency and reliability. Every plant is different, and I enjoy the challenge of learning each process, troubleshooting unique problems and helping customers get meaningful insights from their data. But what I enjoy most is seeing the direct impact of the work. Steel is everywhere, and knowing that you’re contributing to something so foundational to modern life is incredibly fulfilling. ♦

### Are you a steel professional age 35 or younger?

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For more information, visit [AIST.org/membership](https://aist.org/membership) or contact Lauren Veltre at +1.724.814.3082 or [lveltre@aist.org](mailto:lveltre@aist.org).