



AIST Young Professionals



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

During my degree, I did a lab where we annealed different grades of steel using a range of parameters, things like temperature and time, and then looked at how those changes affected the steel's physical properties. What really stuck with me was how even small adjustments could lead to noticeable differences in how the steel behaved. It was fascinating to see how something so strong and industrial could be so sensitive and adaptable. I remember thinking it was kind of like crafting a puzzle with endless possibilities, and each tweak revealed a new piece of the bigger picture. That experience really sparked my interest in metallurgy. It was one of those moments where classroom theory came to life, and I realized how much creativity and precision go into working with metals.

After that, I started exploring what a career in the steel industry could look like. I landed my first

internship and had an incredible experience diving deeper into the aspects that first caught my attention. From there, the technical fulfillment was locked in, and the love for the culture of the industry quickly followed.

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?

While I didn't have any involvement with AIST before starting my career, my academic journey gave me a strong foundation for working in the steel industry. I earned my degree in materials science and engineering from the University of Florida (Go Gators), where I focused on the properties and processing of metals. My coursework included hands-on labs in areas like heat treatment and mechanical testing, along with classes in transport phenomena, thermodynamics and statics. These experiences helped me build a solid understanding of how materials behave and supported my passion in metallurgy. Since entering the industry, I've found AIST programs, resources, events and community incredibly valuable as a young professional. They've helped me continue building on what I started in school.

Have any AIST programs assisted with your career advancement?

Absolutely. AIST has played a pivotal role in my career development. Their programs have helped me build meaningful relationships that support both personal growth and technical advancement. What I've appreciated most is the opportunity to connect with professionals from all corners of the industry.

The Young Professionals Program gave me the chance to connect with others early in their careers, build confidence and learn practical skills for navigating the industry. It made me feel like I wasn't just starting out, I was already part of something bigger. The Women in Steel Program has been equally impactful. It created a space where women in the industry could share experiences, support one another, and talk openly about challenges and successes. Hearing from women who've paved the way has been incredibly motivating and helped me feel more assured in my own path. Both programs have helped me grow not just professionally, but personally. They've shown me the value of community, mentorship, and being part of a network that truly wants to see you succeed.

In addition to AIST's development programs, the Technology Committees have been a huge part of my technical growth. Through plant tours, roundtable discussions and technical presentations, I've gained insights that directly apply to my day-to-day work as a metallurgist. These experiences have helped me stay up to date with industry advancements,

sharpen my technical skills and build a network of professionals I can learn from and exchange ideas with. One of the most valuable aspects of these committees is being able to take what I learn and apply it directly to my work. Whether it's a new approach to a process or a fresh perspective from a peer, the knowledge and relationships I've gained have truly helped set me up for success.

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

For me, the most valuable part of being involved with AIST has been the sense of connection. As a young professional, it can be intimidating stepping into such a technical and established industry, but AIST made it feel welcoming. AIST has created a space where learning and collaboration feel natural. It's been incredibly motivating to be part of a community that's so passionate about what they do and so willing to support the next generation of professionals. Being able to build that network for the future of the industry has been the greatest benefit. Whether I need advice, a second opinion or just someone to talk through a challenge with, I know I have a group of people I can turn to. That kind of support system is invaluable, not only for solving problems, but for building confidence and perspective. Through conferences, committee work and casual conversations, I've met mentors, teammates and friends who've challenged my thinking and helped me grow. It's made me feel not just like a metallurgist, but a confident and engaged contributor to the steel community.

What advice would you give to students considering a career in the steel industry?

If you're even thinking about a career in the steel industry, my advice would be to go for it. It's one of the few fields where you get to combine deep scientific knowledge with hands-on, real-world impact. Whether you're in the lab, on the floor or in the field, you'll see the results of your work in something tangible, powerful and essential to everyday life. Steel is everywhere, and the industry is constantly evolving. From the outside, it might seem traditional, but once you're in it, you realize how much innovation, partnership and forward-thinking is happening behind the scenes. From sustainability, operations, research or technology, there's space to for any person to grow and contribute in meaningful ways.

Also, get involved early. Organizations like AIST offer incredible opportunities to connect with professionals, learn from real-world experiences, and build a network that will support you throughout your career. They create space for development in ways that go far beyond the classroom.

Are you a steel professional age 35 or younger?

Join the new AIST Young Professionals Membership Committee to expand your network and connect with peers.

For more information, visit [AIST.org/membership](https://www.aist.org/membership) or contact Hilary Collins at +1.724.814.3022 or hcollins@aist.org.



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

What I find most unique and interesting about the steel industry is how hands-on and fast-paced it is. As a metallurgist, I'm not just sitting behind a desk, I'm out in the shop, working directly with the material and solving problems in real time. There's something incredibly satisfying about being part of a process where science meets application, and you can see the results of your work take shape.

What I enjoy most is that every day is different. One day I might be on the floor setting up a trial, the next I'm in the lab running samples, diving into data analysis, investigating a customer concern or meeting with vendors to explore new technologies. The challenges are constant, but that's what makes it exciting. You're always learning, adapting and thinking critically. It keeps you on your toes in the best way. Steel is a place where curiosity, grit and hands-on problem-solving come together, and that's what makes it such a rewarding career. ♦