



# AISTech<sup>®</sup>

## 2025 / Retrospective

By Heather N. Smith

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 **SUPERBOOTH**





→ **8,313**  
steel professionals

→ **722**  
steel companies

**RECORD-BREAKING!**

→ **519**  
steel presentations

With every escalator ride, every walk down the sunlit glass corridors and entrance into the sprawling 131,550 square feet of exhibiting space at the Music City Center in Nashville, Tenn., the sheer magnitude of AISTech 2025 became undeniable.

“This year we have a record-breaking exhibit floor with attendees and exhibitors from all over the world. We also have a very large technical conference,” said Brian Smith, AISTech 2025’s conference planning committee chair and Shapemaster STS product manager at ANDRITZ Metals USA.

Encased within the convention center were rows upon rows of 722 exhibiting companies. 125 technical sessions with over 500 presentations also took place throughout the week, which drew 2,352 attendees for the Technology Conference.

In total, 8,313 attendees from across 40 countries attended AISTech 2025, just a handful below AISTech 2024’s record attendance of 8,377.

Special thanks to AISTech’s premier sponsor, The Systems Group, and its global sponsors, SuperBooth and Morgan Engineering, for their support.









## A Growing Community

AIST experienced a meaningful shift in its membership this year. We marked a 17% increase in young professionals, a 31% rise in women and a 16% increase in academic participation.

In support of the increase in academic participation, the AIST Foundation Golf Classic was held on the Sunday before the conference at the Towhee Golf Club just outside Nashville. Sold out with 144 players, the annual event raised US\$25,000 in scholarships and academic grants for students pursuing careers in the steel industry.

That afternoon, two new programs debuted to further reflect that shift: the Women in Steel Development Program and the Young Professional Development Program, both replacing the previous years' traditional roundtable formats and drawing greater participation with multiple sold-out sessions.

The Women in Steel course covered the challenges faced by women in the steel industry, regardless of their backgrounds or specializations. In a panel of insights and practical advice, speakers explored how women navigate career growth, social expectations and workplace dynamics. The panel was held in tandem with a soft-skills session hosted by Rebecca Malotke-Meslin with Pleasantly Aggressive Coaching & Consulting titled Risk-Taking and Mistake-Making: How Fear Is Holding You Back From Innovating, helping attendees recognize the power of vulnerability and experimentation.

Meanwhile, the Young Professional Development Program focused on the realities of building a career in an evolving industry. Panelists discussed finding mentors, adjusting to new roles, risk-taking and reframing setbacks as career growth. The following session, Networking — The Secret Sauce of Career Success, offered a hands-on approach to building relationships that matter, one authentic connection at a time.









Both programs emphasized that in today's steel landscape, knowledge alone isn't enough. Relationships, resilience and purpose are now essential to career advancement.

Opportunities for the 133 student attendees included a student plant tour at Hoeganaes Corp., the undergraduate student project presentation contest, the graduate student poster contest, the Steel to Students recruiting reception, the AIST-TMS John F. Elliott Lecture and the University-Industry Relations Roundtable.

## Technology Conference

The Technology Conference began the following morning with the Howe Memorial Lecture, given this year by Tadashi Furuhashi from the Institute for Materials Research, Tohoku University in Sendai, Japan. Furuhashi presented his lecture, "Roles of Thermomechanical Processing on Microstructure Control of High-Strength Steels."

The lecture emphasized the evolution and significance of thermomechanical processing in enhancing the properties of high-strength steels. An interview with Furuhashi appears on pages 66–67 of this issue.

Throughout the rest of the week, attendees of the Technology Conference had the opportunity to take part in various presentations and panel discussions across all areas of the steelmaking process. The common themes that emerged throughout these sessions were innovation, sustainability, efficiency and ensuring operations persevere in the face of evolving global challenges.

"Technology sessions keep you abreast of what's new in the marketplace. Also, seeing how other folks, other companies have corrected problems in their applications and their builds and being able to take that to other customers, take it back to our company or share that knowledge with other customers who aren't here in attendance," said Mike Allegra, product development specialist at The Timken Co.





## Looking Toward the Future

“While our past has been enduring, our future looks to be truly transformative,” said AIST’s executive director Ron Ashburn as he opened the President’s Award Breakfast.

One of the ongoing themes throughout the conference was transformation, but not for its own sake. Rather, it was the transformation of the steel industry’s enduring legacy driven by a shared vision of a cleaner, smarter and more connected future.

“We are on the cusp of a technological renaissance for steel production. In the next decade, we’re going to unveil amazing levels of innovation: digitalization, artificial intelligence, clean energy – all of these are going to transform the steel industry,” Ashburn continued.

Transformation cannot happen without the cooperation and collaboration of those within the steel industry. AISTech 2025 gave attendees the ability to network with others throughout the industry and create a community of individuals working together toward common goals.



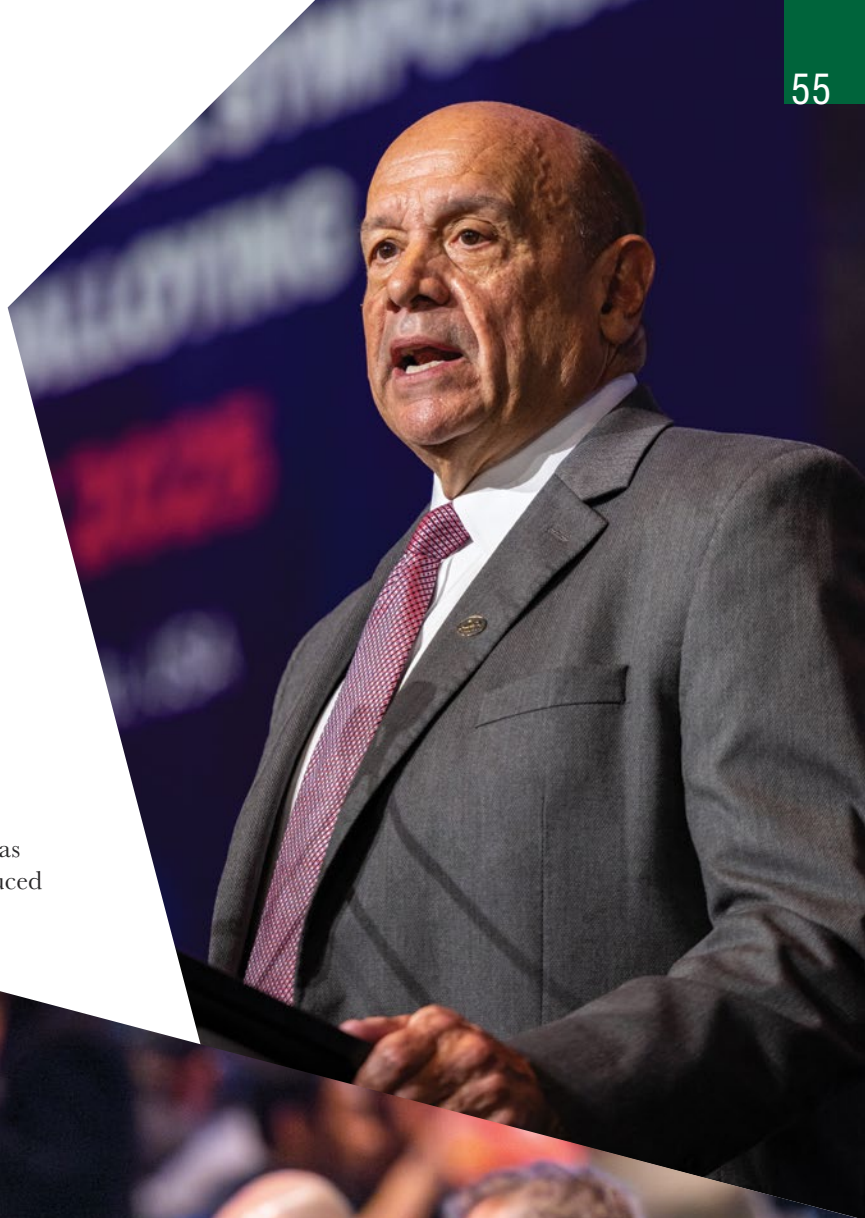


## President's Award Breakfast

The second morning of the conference brought together thousands of steel professionals to honor excellence and leadership across the industry as 2024–2025 AIST President Tom Toner presented various awards including the 2025 Steelmaker of the Year at the President's Award Breakfast.

In his remarks before handing out awards, Toner noted, "Trade, geopolitics, taxes and tariffs: these are the affairs of policymakers and elected officials. Through the chaos, the guiding principles for AIST remains steadfast and true: process, innovation, knowledge sharing and technical rigor."

Looking ahead, he encouraged partnerships between industry, government, universities and trade schools to drive research and development. Emphasizing the shortages of skilled workers such as electricians, welders and mechanics, Toner introduced the AIST-led plan to reach out into trade schools through scholarships, internships, expanded networking and partnerships to ensure the next generation is equipped to help drive steel forward.





Maximo Vedoya /  
Ternium



President's Award Breakfast  
**AISTech<sup>®</sup>2025**

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Toner presented the 2025 AIST Steelmaker of the Year Award to Maximo Vedoya for his “commitment to advanced technology, fair trade and long-term growth for the North American steel industry [which] has created essential and lasting value across the region’s industrial ecosystem.”

In his acceptance speech, Vedoya put a spotlight on his concerns about unfair trade practices and increased competition from China. He emphasized the need for collaboration and coalitions to address these imbalances in the steel industry.

“The USMCA is probably a good start,” Vedoya said. However, he encouraged a better and more effective trade agreement to bolster the competitiveness of the steel industry in the Americas, provide jobs and support local communities. “This next chapter in manufacturing must be built on safety, environmental protection, community engagement and smarter technologies.”

In his closing remarks, he emphasized, “Steel is not an industry of the past – it is the foundation of the future.”

An interview with Vedoya appears on pages 80–87 of this issue.

For a full list of award winners, please see pages 90–97.



**Dick Teets** / Steel Dynamics Inc.







# President's Award Breakfast

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To conclude the breakfast, cofounder and director of Steel Dynamics Inc., Dick Teets, gave his keynote address, “Tales From the Vault,” which encompassed key areas throughout the steel industry.

“Steel’s versatility, strength and cost-effectiveness make it the ideal material,” he said in his opening remarks. “It’s a cornerstone of the global economy.”

Teets went on to address how much the industry’s safety record has improved over time but warned that overconfidence could lead to accidents. Similarly, he spoke of risk assessment being crucial: “Innovation requires creativity and out-of-the-box thinking, but it also needs to be balanced with discipline and rigorous management.”

Moving onto advancements in technology, Teets said, “Through the integration of artificial intelligence and robotics, steel producers have found aids to improve

efficiency, reduce costs and enhance product quality. These advancements are not only transforming the production process but also enabling the development of new products and materials.”

In a humorous aside that garnered laughs and sympathy alike, Teets told the story of when he involuntarily auctioned off his beloved car at SDI’s 10th anniversary and its final destination: being charged into an EAF. To the audience, he held up the last remaining piece he had of it: a keychain.

“The steel industry will continue to play a vital role in addressing the challenges of the 21st century, and those challenges will be many... I still can’t help but think it’s an amazing business to work in,” Teets finished his address.

You can read the full transcript of Teets’ lecture on pages 68–79.





## Town Hall Forum

The final plenary session, AIST's Town Hall Forum, took place the following day. Six panelists took the stage: Ronald Bedard of ArcelorMittal Dofasco G.P., Daniel J. Keown of Steel Dynamics Inc., Daniel M. Killeen of United States Steel Corporation, Nicholas R. Kohlhas of Cleveland-Cliffs Inc., Benjamin E. Kowing of SSAB and Trevor Sandors of DJJ, A Nucor Company.

This year, U.S. President Donald Trump's return to the White House and the resulting reorientation of U.S. trade policy to expand domestic manufacturing, particularly steel, was explored. The panel discussed the new paradigm and shared their perspectives.

The forum was chaired by George Koenig of Hatch and moderated by KDKA-TV (CBS)'s Jon Delano (retired).



**Dan Killeen** / U. S. Steel –  
Gary Works

TOWN HALL FORUM  
**AISTech2025**



**Trevor Saunders** /  
DJJ, A Nucor Company





**Nick Kohlhas** /  
Cleveland-Cliffs Inc.

To open the forum, Delano reminisced how Trump had just surpassed his 100th day in office, and how his conduct and policies in that time inspired the name of the forum this year: Shake, Battle & Roll. He went on to pose the question: what does this all mean for the steel industry and the customers the panel serves?

In this regard, each panelist was given the opportunity to provide one word to describe the North American steel industry. The words chosen included: volatile, investing, underappreciated, opportunity, inspiring and transformative.

For the rest of the panel, which touched on subjects such as tariffs, production, materials, the U. S. Steel and Nippon Steel potential merger, sustainability, blast furnaces versus electric arc furnaces and more, those six words were repeated numerous times.



**Ron Bedard** / ArcelorMittal  
Dofasco G.P.





“I go back and look at the industry and ask the fundamental questions: is this a dying industry or a growing industry?” asked Killeen regarding a growing workforce and the next generation of steelmakers. “It’s absolutely a growing industry — there is opportunity, and nothing provides opportunity like investment.”

You can read a full synopsis of the Town Hall Forum on pages 98–107. All three plenary sessions are also available in full on AIST’s YouTube channel.



**Dan Keown** /  
Steel Dynamics Inc. – Flat Roll  
Group Columbus Division



## One Last Encore

To cap off the final day of the conference on Wednesday, multiple prizes were drawn and given away in the Exhibit Hall. Throughout the week, attendees competed in contests spread out across the show floor: a football toss, cornhole and mini golfing. If they were successful at the games, they were eligible to win a variety of prizes.

The exhibit space also included other features, demonstrations, promotional materials and refreshments throughout as attendees circled the expansive floor and made lasting connections.

The most sought-after prize, however, was the brand-new Chevy™ Silverado truck. At the very end of the conference, attendees showed up en masse to watch the ten randomly drawn candidates try their luck to win. In the end, German attendee Catharina Cziczkat of the marketing division at Proton Products punched #15, the winning number on the lucky wall of prizes.



"I'm feeling, I'm sweating, I'm looking!" said Cziczkat through her excitement as she gestured to her new truck. "It's so amazing to get this, to have this chance!"

"I think the biggest benefit of attending the AIST conference is the people coming together from all over the country, all around the world, talking about our own passions," said Karen Uffalussy, technical marketing manager at RHI Magnesita. "Talking about our own interests, our challenges and discussing problem solving."







Two plant tours were planned for early Thursday morning. This year, attendees had the chance to tour either the CMC Rebar Fabrication facility or the Nissan Smyrna Assembly Plant. These tours give attendees, particularly those from outside the U.S., the opportunity to see various steelmaking processes and applications up close.

“It is a wonderful international event. It celebrates the iron and steel industry, this industry that does so much for our countries, for the world and for our futures,” said president of the Steel Manufacturers Association Philip K. Bell. ◆

