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Industry Professional Questionnaire: Heather DuBois

Alumni Questionnaire, Industry Professional Questionnaire



Q: Are you an alumna of the University of Maine?

A: Yes, I am a proud alumna of the University of Maine!

Q: What was your course of study? Were you a UMPPF scholarship recipient?

A: Chemical Engineering. Yes, I was honored to be a UMPPF scholarship recipient.

Q: How long have you been in the pulp and paper industry?

A: Once in the pulp and paper industry, it never leaves you. Though I am not actively “in it” every day anymore, my company certainly is, and I am fortunate to be able to frequently interact with many individuals from across the industry. I graduated in 1996 and worked in the industry in a number of different roles at Nalco Water including Application Engineering, Sales, and Marketing.

Q: How long have you been involved with UMPPF?

A: I started as a high school junior (loved the program!) and was actively involved with UMPPF throughout my time at the University and have stayed involved over the years. I couldn't have been happier to become a Board Member this year and look forward to giving back to the organization who has given me so much.

Q: What is the most beneficial thing that University of Maine Pulp and Paper Foundation provides for you and how?

A: I appreciate the opportunity to network with other industry leaders, to stay up to date on industry trends, and am extremely fulfilled in getting to interact with the talented students that are involved in the UMPPF.

Q: What made you decide to join the board?

A: I would like to give back to the organization who has given me such a strong foundation for success and contribute to the lives of students, helping to introduce them to challenging and rewarding careers in engineering. I was very fortunate to have industry leaders to look up to as a student at UMaine. They inspired me and helped me see the many options that were out there thanks to my UMaine education. I want to do the same for the students of today.

Q: Where do you work and what is your current position?

A: I work at Nalco Water running our Global High Tech business unit as the Vice President and General Manager. I'm responsible for leading a global team to deliver value-added solutions to customers in the microelectronics and data center industries that enhance their operations and support them in achieving their goals.

Q: What do you think are common misconceptions about the industry that need to be debunked?

A: I think that a lot of work is already being done to debunk the misconceptions, specifically around papermaking not being sustainable and the paper industry not doing their part for sustainability initiatives. The efforts to dispel these misconceptions are wonderful!

As we look at water specifically, over the last decade the pulp and paper industry has made significant strides in embracing water stewardship. This was prompted by rising global water scarcity concerns and greater recognition among companies of the risks they face related to water. As a water-intensive industry, pulp and paper operations are inextricably linked to water in many ways and in an era of greater water awareness, the way in which big water users approach their water management and address their water-related risks carries more significance than ever before.

It is exciting to see the strides being made across the industry, but I know there are still misconceptions out there about the good work being done.

Q: What does the future of the industry look like?

A: The future of the industry is extremely bright! The rise in eCommerce rates continues to help drive [paper] board production. Additionally, the movement to more sustainable food packaging has created a great opportunity for fiber-based food packages. Meanwhile, tissue and towel continue to grow, especially outside of North America where the increasing middle class has driven demand.

The industry is going through a substantial transformation and it continues to morph and develop. It is exciting to see new application and uses for wood being developed as well as the opportunity for innovation to continue to enhance productivity, reduce waste, and help keep mills safe.

Q: What are some new practices or trends within the industry that more people should know about?

A: The movement to fiber-based packaging for food is a growing trend. Due to its ability to breakdown easily, fiber is seen as a potential replacement for plastic-based packaging. In addition, the rise in eCommerce has created an opportunity to drive new innovations within the board and package space.

From programs designed to give boxes strength without increasing weight, to on-demand box creation to “right size” boxes, the drive of eCommerce will continue to evolve in the board and package market.

Q: Do you have any advice for high school students who are interested in a STEM education and/or the pulp and paper industry?

A: Jump in! This is an exciting place to be and can provide you with incredible options throughout your career with a strong STEM foundation. I would also highly recommend participating in the Consider Engineering summer program. This is a challenging and rewarding way to see what life is like as an engineering student and to get a taste of the type of problem solving skills that you will learn at UMaine.

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