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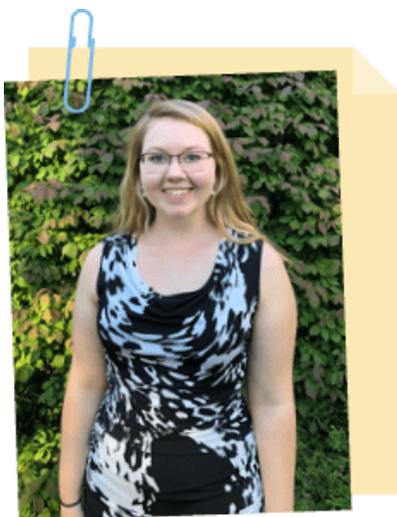


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Alumni Questionnaire: Elaina Gilman

Alumni Questionnaire, Industry



Q: How long you've been with your current position/company?

A: I was a 2019 UMPPF ChemE graduate and just hit my two year anniversary with PCA in Filer City, MI. It's great to have a little piece of Maine out here in Michigan; there are seven of us working here full time now, plus a constant rotation of co-ops. It's nice working with other UMPPF grads, because it's kind of like school. Some people you band together with and you push each other, others you have some healthy competition against. It all makes you better.

Q: What are your thoughts/feelings/ideas about being in the pulp and paper industry?

A: The pulp and paper industry can seem kind of intimidating but it really has a small town feel because no matter where you go, somebody else is tied to Maine or knows somebody you've worked with, and they want you to succeed.

Q: How did UMPPF prepare you for your current job?

A: The biggest asset you can have as an engineer is strong communication skills. You have to be able to tell people the solutions you come up with – it's not enough just to solve the problem. This is something I think the UMPPF really helps with, because they get you an abundance of face time with current industry professionals at all levels. I got comfortable

talking to Mark Kowlzan, the CEO of PCA, before I ever had to present within the company, so the perspective and confidence you're able to walk in with is so different.

Q: What makes UMPPF special?

A: The UMPPF is special because for four years, you don't hear the phrase "male-dominated industry." You're surrounded by successful, inspiring women who handle themselves so well. They walk in the room and command attention without meaning to, because they've conquered the male-dominated industry they've been working in since they walked out of the program. I will always remember the day Addie Nadeau announced the first incoming UMPPF class that was over 50% female. Carrie, Jen, Barb, Addie – thank you, all of you; not for teaching me, but for showing me, that it's okay to just be me and take up space.

Q: How would you respond if a student said they weren't cut out for engineering or math or science?

A: If you think you aren't cut out to be an engineer, join the club. Let me tell you a secret... It doesn't matter. If you're stubborn enough to push past your own mindset, you can probably be an engineer, because it's really all about willpower and work ethic (in my opinion). Please understand though, school is the hard part. Once you get through that, you've opened yourself up to so many opportunities for the rest of your life.

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