Blog Post: Student Questionnaire: Meagan Dube

University of Maine Pulp & Paper Foundation

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Q: How did you discover the University of Maine Pulp and Paper Foundation and what attracted you to it?

A: I discovered UMPPF through a program my sophomore year in high school called Girls Engineer Maine (GEM). It was a good program that gave me an introduction to engineering and really piqued my interest in the field. My teachers in high school saw that I loved problem solving and helping people. They led me to the Pulp and Paper Foundation and thought it might be the right direction for me.

Q: What was top of mind when considering the program?

A: I was worried about paying for college, having enough time to do everything I hoped I would, and also worried about doing well in my classes. I have always done fairly well in school and was very active in extracurricular activities, but I was worried I would not have time to fully devote myself to the program. I was very wrong. The program is one of the best things that has happened to me in my college career. It has opened so many doors and opportunities with companies I never imagined myself talking with. It has boosted my confidence tremendously and everyone in the Foundation has been very supportive.

Q: Tell us about your experience at the Consider Engineering summer program.
A: I attended Consider Engineering the summer of 2017! It’s a great way to meet people. A lot of the friends I have now I met during Consider Engineering. It does a great job of showing students what kinds of engineering there are and what might be the best fit for you. I was also a counselor in Consider Engineering two summers later and it was very humbling to be back in the program that helped me develop into who I am today.

Q: What is your favorite thing about UMPPF?

A: UMPPF is like a big family. There is so much support available when you’re experiencing all the different opportunities. The graduates in the program are present in the industry so you can find a UMPPF graduate anywhere you go, and they make you feel at home. In college, the Foundation Scholars become your best friends. The two wonderful women (Carrie and Jen) who plan and direct everything become like second moms. It is a home away from home and my experience with the Foundation has been nothing but amazing.

Q: What do you think are common misconceptions about the industry that you were surprised to learn weren’t true?

A: One common misconception that many people have (even I did) was that making paper is boring. Some of my friends describe it like this, “We don’t make paper, the machines make paper. The machines are constantly trying to damage themselves along with the paper and it’s our job to make sure that doesn’t happen.” There are so many things happening inside a mill that it can be an entire learning experience in itself.

Q: Describe your co-op experience.

A: I am currently a Project Engineer Co-op (mechanical engineering major) for the Packaging Corporation of America in Filer City, Michigan. I am given projects to make the mill more efficient and safer for everyone that uses it. I was terrified that I would not know enough about the job, but I realized that the company does not expect you to know a lot during coop. The best thing to do is to be open minded and as positive as possible. There are going to be things that you don't know and that's okay. A co-op/internship opportunity is available to help you learn about processes and how to go about working on projects in the real world. It is designed to help you learn and grow. Plus, you get paid!

Q: If one of your friends were considering UMPPF, what would you tell them?

A: I tell anyone interested in UMPPF that they should highly consider it! It is a wonderful way to gain experience, meet new people, network with businesses, and help yourself grow in so many ways. I would try at least one semester of co-op before dismissing the industry, so they have a more informed decision. If you don't like the industry, that's okay, you don't owe anything back to the Foundation and you've only helped yourself by having the experience.

Q: How do you feel about your future in the industry?
A: I feel very fortunate to be a part of an industry that is constantly changing and growing. I know there will always be job opportunities for me and if I ever want to travel, I know that's an option for me. It's an industry where people grow and “move up the ladder” and I feel very secure in my position.