

Meeting Summary for ACEC/MA discussion with ACEC/MA Board member Hillary Lacirignola, PE

Quick recap

Hillary Lacirignola of Weston & Sampson and ACEC/MA's Executive Director Abbie Goodman discussed the firm's involvement in promoting engineering and career awareness among K-12 schools, including their onboarding process for high school interns and successful recruitment of students through alumni connections and co-op programs. They also discussed the evolution of communication methods and their effectiveness in engaging young students.

Firm's STEM Promotion and Internships

Hillary and ACEC/MA discussed the firm's involvement in promoting engineering and career awareness among K-12 schools. Hillary explained that the firm has an internal STEM committee that identifies opportunities for staff to participate in local events such as STEM days and science fairs. They encourage staff to participate in these events and provide them with tools to make presentations, including ACEC/MA's PowerPoint presentation that firms can adapt as needed. The presentation is here: <https://www.acecma.org/about/news/acec-ma-classroom-visit-presentation-module-for-you-3506>

The firm also participates in the senior year internship program for high school students. For middle school students, staff participate as judges for science fairs or facilitate after-school activities. For younger students, staff participate in presentations or after-school activities if invited. Lastly, Hillary discussed the firm's senior spring program, which involves taking high school seniors on as interns to give them a professional setting experience and additional learning opportunities.

High School Intern Onboarding Strategy

Hillary discussed the firm's approach to onboarding high school interns during senior spring (April-May timeframe), treating them as a part of the firm's team and embedding them in the system. She highlighted the importance of establishing a schedule and communication protocol, and the provision of safety training through OSHA 10 certification for these students at the beginning of the senior spring experience. The interns are sent on field trips and job shadowing programs, and are offered value-added services to clients. The program is designed to help interns decide on their future career paths, with most already having decided on engineering. The interns are not paid, but are given useful experiences and connections. The firm sometimes provides them as volunteers for coordination of materials for municipal projects.

Recruiting Students Through College Visits and Alumni Connections

Hillary discussed the successful recruitment of students to their firm through alumni connections and co-op programs. She shared a case where a student decided on a college after speaking with alumni from his preferred schools, and another where a student was undecided between two colleges. Hillary also mentioned their robust co-op program, which involves working with engineering colleges in Massachusetts, and their practice of seeking to hire co-op students who have been a good fit with their firm.

Adapting Communication for Young Students

Hillary and ACEC/MA discussed the evolution of communication methods and their effectiveness in engaging young students. Hillary emphasized the importance of adapting to different communication styles, such as email and other digital platforms, to effectively reach younger audiences. ACEC/MA suggested using resources like [Discover E](#) for age-appropriate activities and materials. They also discussed the importance of providing a nurturing environment for students, particularly in the high school years, to keep them engaged in engineering and related fields.

ACEC/MA experimented with AI companion for recording and transcribing this conversation, with the aim of sharing the transcript with other firms.

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