

Women in Plastics Event Leads to Internship

In late April, Polymershapes supported IAPD's Women in Plastics Educational Workshop at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, aka UMass Lowell. Polymershapes President Kevin Short delivered a keynote presentation entitled "Achieving Greatness in Performance Plastics" and Polymershapes representatives enjoyed a busy half-day of learning and connecting.

During the event, Amber Fulmer, general manager of Polymershapes' facility in Tyngsboro, MA, USA, connected with Caitlin Janielis, a UMass Lowell student in her junior year. The dialogue that followed resulted in Janielis joining the Polymershapes team through the school's co-op/internship program. Through the end of 2017, Janielis will "learn the ropes" as a Polymershapes inside sales representative.

Fulmer and Janielis shared the following thoughts and insights about how this mutually beneficial opportunity developed as a result of the IAPD Women in Plastics event.

Expectations

Fulmer: The Tyngsboro team (Fulmer plus Inside Sales Supervisor Sheryl Harris and Outside Sales Representative Jason Nowacki) attended the event in part to support IAPD's Women in Plastics initiatives, which we believe holds great promise for nurturing and attracting new talent to the performance plastics industry.

UMass Lowell is a "local" school to our location, so we also participated with the goal of learning more about the University's plastics curriculum and whether there were opportunities for us to connect with people in that program who would be interested in internships — and potentially full-time positions — with a distribution industry leader.

Janielis: I heard about the Women in Plastics event at a meeting of UMass Lowell's student chapter of the Society for Plastics Engineering. The chapter president at that time brought it to our group's attention. She strongly encouraged everyone, especially female students, to participate. I thought it sounded like a good networking opportunity and I hoped it would help lead to a co-op position.

Connecting

Fulmer: The event included a "mini trade fair," in which attendees went from booth to booth speaking with representatives from participating companies.

We met a LOT of smart and capable people. We were particularly interested in speaking to undergraduate students and we were impressed with the undergrads who spent time with us.

As we got acquainted with Caitlin, she expressed a genuine interest in distribution, particularly as a way to learn much more about the wide range of customers using performance plastics and the vast array of applications they create and develop.

We learned she was seeking co-op opportunities and we were eager to get her onto our team in an internship capacity.

Janielis: Overall, the event was great for learning about plastics distribution — we haven't been exposed too much about this aspect of the plastics industry in school and I didn't really know it was a "thing." The speakers were fantastic and it was interesting to learn so much more about the role dis-

tributors play in getting plastic materials to end users, as well as the products and purposes the materials are used for. During one of the speaker sessions, we introduced ourselves to people sitting around us. I began chatting with Amber. Then, at the trade fair, I visited the Polymershapes display and offered Amber my resume.

The "Bottom Line"

Janielis: I like what I'm doing at Polymershapes because at this point



Polymershapes intern Caitlin Janielis (on the phone) and Amber Fulmer.

in the plastics engineering program we haven't been exposed to this aspect of the business. It's been interesting to learn how distributors interact with customers, down to the nitty-gritty of placing an order and getting it processed. Spending time in the warehouse was cool because I got a better understanding of the role the distributor can play in fabricating materials to help meet the customers' needs. It's been especially interesting to see how much film conversion Polymershapes does and how they do it — film materials and applications are another area that's not covered in detail in my program.

Fulmer: Caitlin started with us part-time in June and began working full-time on July 1, in an arrangement that will last until the end of the year. She's spent time already working in our warehouse and she just completed her training on our ordering and IT systems. Now we'll get her started in making outcalls, participating in ride-alongs with outside salespeople and generally learning the ins-and-outs of plastics distribution. At the end of the year, we'll assess what the fit is going forward between her future interests and our needs.

All in all, IAPD delivered a great networking event — now I have a point of contact for recruitment at UMass Lowell and we look forward to opportunities to create a "pipeline" that will enable us to source more talent from the school.

