



NCSEA Foundation: Laying the Groundwork for a Bright Future

By Jami Lorenz, P.E.

Having been involved with NCSEA for the past 14 years, I have always admired and respected the leadership and unification that the organization provides to the structural engineering profession. As a former NCSEA Summit Delegate and President of the Structural Engineers Association of Montana, I quickly started to integrate myself into the NCSEA Summit Committee, and – after a few years – reveled in the new energy and growth the Young Member Group Support Committee and SE3 initiatives infused into the organization. So, in the Fall of 2020, I jumped at the chance to join the NCSEA Board as a Director, soon realizing that I was joining at a promising time in the lifespan of NCSEA, following the establishment of the NCSEA Foundation.

In early 2020, the Foundation was established to herald a new chapter in NCSEA's support of our profession and the diversity of thought. Ultimately, the goal of the Foundation is to sponsor initiatives that elevate our profession, provide diversity within our community, bolster our state SEAs, and advance important research and educational programs. As a truly charitable 501(c)3 organization, the Foundation provides donors an avenue for tax-deductible donations with the knowledge that their funds are being directed to these critical and targeted goals.

In the first year, the NCSEA Foundation has already made significant strides in laying the groundwork for advancing these critical initiatives for our future through its Grant Program for SEAs, the first-ever Diversity in Structural Engineering Scholarships, educational content, and funding for industry research. A major focus for NCSEA is to increase engagement and provide resources to our state SEA Member Organizations through the Foundation, building a more robust network and connectivity across the country.

Grant Program

The Grant Program was the first initiative taken on by the NCSEA Foundation to assist our Member Organizations in providing new and innovative programs to their members. With all the challenges of 2020, there were some creative and socially relevant ideas coming from the state SEAs. A few of the more innovative grant recipients of 2020 were:

- **SEAOI (Illinois) awarded funding to create a cohesive library of STEM videos and funding to enhance the association's Remote Site Visits.**
- **SEAONC (Northern California) awarded SE3 DEI Firm Leader Cohorts funding to provide a forum in which firm leaders can discuss their commitments to and the challenges in implementing strategies for racial DEI in their firms and the industry.**

The complete list can be viewed here www.ncsea.com/awards/grants. We cannot wait to see what 2021 brings!

Diversity in Structural Engineering Scholarship

The first of its kind in our industry, the Diversity in Structural Engineering Scholarship was established to award funding to students who have been traditionally underrepresented in structural

engineering, including (but not limited to) Black/African Americans, Native/Indigenous Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and other people of color. Multiple scholarships will be presented annually to junior college students, undergraduate students, and/or graduate students pursuing degrees in structural engineering. With over 50 applicants this year, the Foundation awarded four \$3,000 scholarships in 2021, along with free registration for the Structural Engineering Summit. Recipients hailed from Oregon State University, University of Southern California, University of Texas-San Antonio, and Rowan University. Read more about them in the NCSEA News article in this issue (*page 44*) or here: www.ncsea.com/awards/scholarship. The generation of an endowment is the next step towards ensuring these scholarships can continue well into the future.

Education

Another avenue of grant and scholarship fundraising is through providing new and innovative educational content. For example, the Foundation hosted two webinars in 2020 that fall outside the more typical technical education. The Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Webinar Series (www.ncsea.com/resources/dei) and the Economic Outlook for Structural Engineering: 2021 & Beyond event (www.ncsea.com/events/past) pushed engineers outside of the code books to think about the bigger picture in their own firms.

Industry Research

Another cornerstone of the Foundation is supporting and funding research incorporating practicality into the theory behind building code development. The first such project was a Wind Engineering Research Program in Support of the ASCE 7 *Load Standard*. The potential to support research for practicing structural engineers is a big leap for the organization's support of our industry's bright future.

What's Next?

To ensure streamlined operations and the best use of resources in this initial stage of development, the NCSEA Board of Directors currently fills the role of leading the Foundation. However, we are now beginning to reach out to our industry to enlist support, build diversity, and continue to refine our growth strategy. Working in tandem with our state SEA foundations is an essential part of the Foundation's success, and we will be further defining this partnership as we grow. I personally think that the Foundation and its primary objectives will be the "magic sauce" to elevate engagement within our national structural engineering community. We hope you join us and bring your ideas to the table!•



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