



WHY? WHY? WHY?

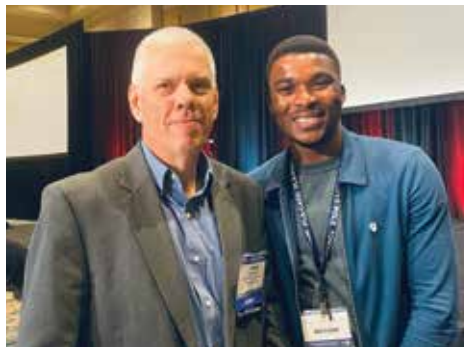
By Jon Magnusson, P.E., S.E., Hon.AIA, F.SEI, Dist.M.ASCE

We each face thousands of decisions in our lives. I want to share three of my decisions relative to my practice of structural engineering in the hope that you might find something in common.

Why Structural Engineering?

During my first structural class as a first-year civil engineering student at the University of Washington, I learned how to design a beam, a column, a slab, and so on. I quickly concluded that structural engineering would *not* be my choice under the civil engineering umbrella. Too many formulas. Too many details. Too many complications. But the next quarter, I took a design course that applied those lessons to reveal how they could be used to create a building. Suddenly a light went on. This was really fun! With those skills, it was possible to design a building that could support gravity, wind, and earthquake loads. All of my joys of building little projects as a youngster could be increased by orders of magnitude...and people would pay me to do it!

I have never looked back. Every day has provided challenges, opportunities for creativity, and education. Most importantly, it has led to the development of incredible relationships with other engineers and the many, many people that contribute to the design and construction process. I have learned that our engineering work is not centered on steel, concrete, or wood. It is centered on people. We have a wonderful profession that rewards our members in many ways.



Mentoring pair Frank Agnew and first-time student scholarship attendee Alex Adediran at ETS Conference.

Why Support the SE Profession?

It is possible to practice as a structural engineer and never be involved in a professional society, a technical committee, or “participate” in any way. However, structural engineers today owe a great debt to the engineers that came before them that volunteered and worked to improve the profession.

The potential avenues of support and “giving back” are many. They include your time, talent, energy, and financial resources. All are important and help the cause of professional improvement.

Financial support has the unique benefit of leverage. When combined with other like-minded donors, a financial gift can provide the resources to accomplish tasks that would not be possible by any individual or within the funding of the normal dues structure of a professional society.

There are many opportunities to support a variety of worthy causes. These are important causes such as school support, medical research, and community efforts. And, of course, each person’s decision is usually not which single cause to support but what selections from the charitable menu most closely align with the individual’s values and priorities.

Support of our profession is one of the choices that I have made. The motivation comes from gratitude for previous engineers who built our profession, actions that can improve our practice today, and investing in the people who will be leading our profession in the future.

Why Support the SEI Futures Fund?

I have served on the Boards of eleven different non-profit organizations, several of them related to the engineering profession. All are worthy of support. What is unique about the SEI Futures Fund?

- 1) The SEI Futures Fund has global aspirations for improvement of the profession. Supporting efforts like SEI Global Activities and SEI Codes and Standards work has worldwide benefits.
- 2) SEI Futures Fund grants create benefits for engineers in *every* state.
- 3) Structural engineers award SEI Futures Fund grants for structural engineers. Grant recipients are selected by the SEI Futures Fund Board of Directors. Joe Burns, Linda Kaplan, Jim Harris, and Donna Friis are joining me on the Board this year.
- 4) The largest SEI Futures Fund grants have historically been for “scholarships.” Not academic scholarships, but support for university students and young professionals to attend

Structures Congress and the Electrical Transmission and Substation (ETS) Structures Conference and get involved in SEI. While there is certainly a benefit for the individual recipient, the true beneficiary is the profession. These are the seeds being planted for future leaders.

- 5) Many other SEI Futures Fund grants match the breadth of the many SEI efforts, from codes and standards to embodied carbon reduction to improving business practices. Also supported are outreach programs to encourage the best and brightest to enter structural engineering, including those groups that have not done so historically. SEI Futures Fund grants can also support SEI efforts in collaboration with partner organizations.
- 6) ASCE completely covers SEI Futures Fund fundraising costs. 100% of your donation goes to professional programs benefitting structural engineering.

The SEI Futures Fund is the *only* engineering philanthropic effort investing in the profession’s future, as described above. The Futures Fund is at the top of my list for financial support of structural engineering professional efforts.

Every gift, regardless of size, is critically important to improve the profession and prepare for its future. It is a selfless act with great personal benefit for you.

Please join me and many others in support of our profession through the SEI Futures Fund. I look forward to seeing your name on the donor list. Please donate at

www.asce.org/SEIFuturesFund.



Jon Magnusson is a Senior Principal at Magnusson Klemencic Associates in Seattle, WA, and Chair of the SEI Futures Fund Board.