

STEM SPOTLIGHT

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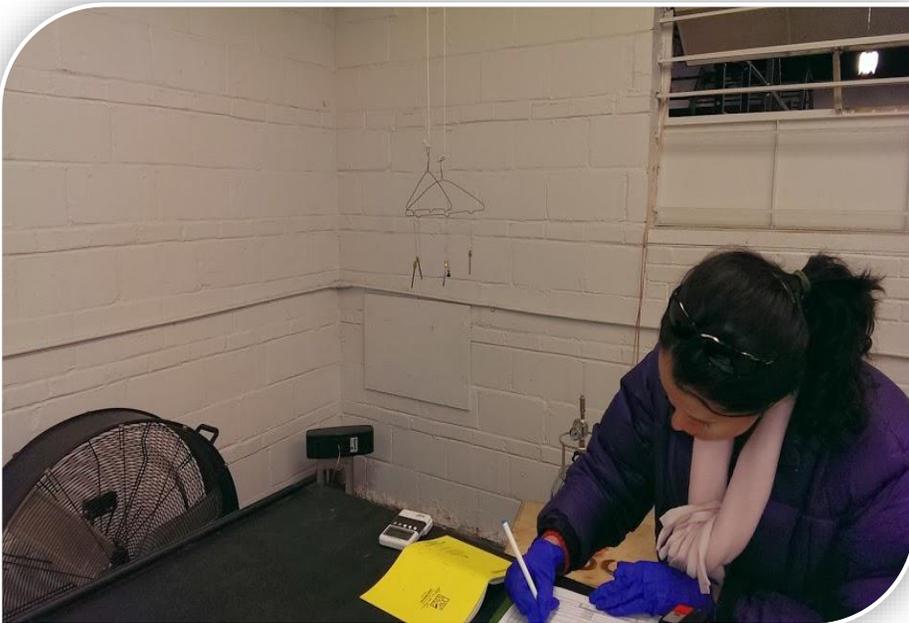


Q How did you select your college major?

A I loved math and science classes in high school, especially calculus and chemistry. My parents stressed the importance of considering a college major in engineering due to the future financial stability and flexibility of career choices associated with engineering.

Q What was the biggest influence in your selection of major/ career?

A I knew that I wanted to select a college major and future career that emphasized science and math, since I loved the subjects. I was also very fortunate because my older sister majored and obtained her degree in civil engineering while I was in high school. This gave me a better understanding of the commitment and work involved in selecting engineering as a college major. I also had the opportunity to interview an engineering graduate student, who was my sister's friend, while I was in high school. He discussed his career as an environmental engineer with me. The work he described (e.g. investigation of hazardous waste sites) was very interesting to me, since this work required an interest in and knowledge of chemistry.





Q How do you/your company make a positive impact on society/our community?

A Our job is to protect human health and the environment. When a site contains hazardous waste, we make sure the property is remediated (cleaned up) so that it will be safe for its intended use. By doing this, we also help to bring the property back into productive use, which is an economic benefit to the community.

Q If you could go back to high school and select any elective course to take that would have better prepared you for college, what would it be?

A I took all of the higher math and science courses that were available. I would definitely recommend taking as many higher math and science classes as possible. I also took a public speaking course in high school, even though I was painfully shy. While the public speaking course was not directly related to engineering, it helped prepare me for public speaking opportunities in college and in my career. As engineers, we interact with members of the public on a regular basis, so we need good communication skills.

Q What is your favorite aspect of your job?

A I really enjoy investigating sites from the very beginning, which includes finding potential sites and assessing the potential for the sites to impact human health and the environment. We investigate sites that are potentially impacted by hazardous chemicals (waste). This involves research into the industries/facilities that historically operated in certain areas, the types of chemicals either used or potentially used by the facilities, the locations most likely to be affected by any chemicals that leaked or spilled, and the current use of the property. We use this information to select the types samples we will collect (ex. soil, groundwater, air, surface water, etc.), where we will collect the samples, and the specific chemicals to analyze in the samples.

Q What is the most interesting thing you have been able to do in your career?

A It is great to see the transformation of properties formerly abandoned and impacted by hazardous waste into remediated, useable, and enjoyable properties for the community, such as parks and greenlines.

Q What makes you get up each morning excited about your profession?

A I am excited that I have the opportunity to use the skills I love, such as math and science, to help improve the quality of Tennessee's air, water, and land.

Q What advice would you like to share with K-12 students who are considering your profession?

A If you love to learn and want a challenging career, engineering is definitely a career path to consider. I have worked for my current employer for 10 years, and I still have the opportunity to learn something new every day. Also, experiencing and overcoming challenges in your chosen college major and career is fulfilling. It is rewarding to solve a difficult problem, and it will build your self-confidence.