

SME 2015 Annual Meeting Report

I would like to thank the SME TC Board for providing support from Sponsors donations to the University of Minnesota Twin Cities SME Student Chapter that gave me the opportunity to attend the SME annual conference in Denver, Colorado in February 2015. It was a great experience for me! I took in so much information over such a short period of time, I had to come back and almost replay the days to make sure I remembered everything I learned!

One of the first things that we took part in was attending the Student Board Meeting. This, for me, turned out to be the most educational part of the whole trip. Hearing the other universities talk about their chapters, what they are doing, and the challenges they were facing held a lot of value for me. As outreach coordinator I was interested in two general themes that kept coming up throughout the meeting; how to get younger students involved, and how to outreach to companies in the area.

I had a few ideas as to how we could reach out to students who don't know about SME.

1. Updating our university student page. I think that Mohammed and Jared had been working on this but making sure this is as up to date as possible is important so that students who are interested know who to talk to about joining.
2. Possibly setting up a Facebook page about the student chapter here on campus. Facebook is a great way to network with friends, or the general community about SME. It could be a way to get the word out just by having it pop up onto someone's news feed. It could also be a good way to connect with other student chapters in the area, or to the national or state level SME community. We could share pictures from field trips, or write posts to get people excited and interested in SME.
3. Reaching out to the Geoclub for possible new members. The Geoclub could be a great place for new members, considering that the students in Geoclub are interested in the minerals that most companies are mining. Getting them to come on field trips to see how the minerals they learn about in the classroom, are being mined could be a great way to advertise to those students how beneficial SME could be to their overall education. A few of us on the committee are friends with John (the president of Geoclub) so it should be relatively easy to set up going to one of their meeting and talking to the members about SME.
4. Finally, possibly outreaching to K-12 students about SME could be an option we want to explore. Also, reaching out to community colleges in the area about SME. I am not sure how we would go about setting something like that up but I am sure working with you or someone from the local SME chapter we could figure a way out.

Dr Reid has mentioned a couple of speakers that would be interested in coming and giving talks to our chapter, but setting up speakers could be a way to get people interested in joining as well. Learning from people in the industry could be a great way to persuade people to join. Professor Barnes has mentioned a couple of companies that could be interested in providing tours in the area so also looking into those could be a good start.

Moving forward in the weekend in Denver, the next thing we did was attend the Keynote Plenary session. The overall message that I took away from this session was that mining is working on changing the general public's overall perception of mining. It seems that the mining community is trying to "dig out" of a publicity hole that might have been created when some companies were called out for poor practices. Another overall trend I found in the talk was about how the price of most, if not all, minerals being mined has been driven up. This is because there are less mines, so the supply goes down, which in turn drives the prices up on the mines that are still in operation. I had some issues with how some of the speakers seemed to avoid any questions dealing with the environment, and what specifically their companies were doing to try and stop some of the destructive tendencies that can be associated with mining. If some of the speakers had given specific examples on their practices, I think that would have gone over better.

The next stop for us was the exhibit hall. I talked to the following booths and gave them SME Awareness cards: CETCO, Xylem, Zonge, Monico, Cloud peak Energy, Nicholson, Blue Water Technologies, University of Kentucky, Poly Corp, Metal Mining Consulting, Delta Rigging and Tools, Purolite, and then I put some at the charging stations and in the lounge area.

Then, we went to three or four technical talks. The first was "The Value of Good Hydraulic Conductivity Data" by M. Gozdor. This information comes into play when trying to dewater a zone before extraction. There can be high variability in these values in a small space, and the values can range based on what kind of test is run. The second talk we went to was "Shale Gas Recovery Modeling in Heterogeneous Systems" by D. Gabeva. It was about the derivation and modeling of shale gases in heterogeneous systems. I learned that water saturation has an inverse relationship with gas saturation.

The final two talks we went to had to do with Frac Sands, a geologic overview and where in the US they are naturally occurring. The presentations were given by Mary Ellen Benson and Anna Wilson. An ideal frac sand that is naturally occurring has the following qualities: high silica content, well-rounded, uniform grain size, low turbidity, and has a high crush resistance. We have some frac sands in Minnesota in the St. Peter and Jordan Sandstones. I found these two talks the most interesting out of the whole weekend.

The final event of the weekend was the Friends of Minnesota gathering on Tuesday night. This was a great experience, and a great opportunity to network! I talked to the group from Oklahoma, who was there for the Forum on Geology of Industrial Minerals for most of the night. I learned so much from them in such a short amount of time, and I made connections I hope to follow up on in the future.

Overall, the weekend was an extremely beneficial and eye-opening experience. Like I mentioned earlier, I really feel like I learned so much information in such a short amount of time, there really is no replacing that experience. My thanks to the sponsors again for providing me with the opportunity to go on this amazing trip.

Kendra Fallon