

If Not Us, Then Whom? If Not Now, When?

The American Segmental Bridge Institute commits to empowering others for the future

by Jacob Martin, RS&H Inc.

If we all took the time to consider our own personal stories and individual journeys, and asked ourselves, "How did I get where I am today?," our answers would vary because our paths have been different. Whether you are a student, young professional, tradesperson, entrepreneur, industry leader, or a person approaching retirement, you have had unique experiences and opportunities. However, we do not tend to share these experiences and opportunities, both personal and professional, beyond the confines of our close professional or social groups. Though we positively affect those closest to us, we should consider our potential to reach further and affect those beyond our conventional circles. If we do not reach out, who will? And if we do not act now, when will we?

This past year the American Segmental Bridge Institute (ASBI) partnered with organization members to reach out beyond their typical member audience.

Furthermore, ASBI sought to invest in the next generation by targeting the education and advancement of engineering students. A volunteer committee, the ASBI Student Program Committee, was formed by a group of energetic individuals: Nyssa Beach (resident engineer, Colorado Department of Transportation), Logan Hall (RS&H Inc.), Jacob Martin (project engineer, RS&H Inc.), Dr. Andrea Schokker (American Concrete Institute), Xue Bing "Jade" Yeap (project engineer, RS&H Inc.), and committee adviser Gregg Freeby (ASBI executive director). This group shared a common goal to not only affect, but also empower future engineers and leaders by developing an initiative centered around progressive learning, scholarship, and mentorship.

During program development, the committee worked diligently to provide students with opportunities to broaden their classroom knowledge and connect with leaders in the transportation/

concrete segmental bridge industry. The program involved a student competition as well as invitations to attend and receive mentorship at the 34th Annual ASBI convention in Austin, Texas. To participate in the competition, students were asked to respond to a problem statement on the sustainability of concrete segmental bridges by submitting a video presentation. To help them best respond to the prompt, students were directed to various resources, such as ASBI and Texas Department of Transportation publications, and encouraged to conduct additional research to learn more about concrete segmental bridges, sustainability, and potential uses of new technologies in concrete segmental bridge construction. The submitted video presentations were evaluated, and the top presenters were chosen to attend the ASBI convention, make a live presentation during the convention, and compete for a scholarship. Students who were not selected to compete at the annual

Presentation of awards to the winners of the 2022 American Segmental Bridge Institute Student Competition. Back row from left: Scholarship sponsor representatives Jacob Martin (RS&H), Tim Barry (RS&H), Craig Finley (COWI), Tom Stelmack (Parsons), Carter Masterson (Malcolm International), Ken Price (WSP). Front row from left: Award winners Thomas Costello and Nuzhat Humayun Kabir. Photo: Goen South, The Event Company.





A student competition information packet was distributed to universities to provide students with the guidelines for the 2022 American Segmental Bridge Institute Student Competition. Figure: ASBI Student Program Committee.


conference were still encouraged to attend.

On the first day of the conference, the ASBI Student Program Committee facilitated a student/sponsor/mentor meet-and-greet to further connect students to leaders in the transportation/concrete segmental bridge industry. All students who attended the conference had the opportunity to meet leaders from sponsoring companies and were paired with program sponsors who would mentor them throughout the conference. Mentors were encouraged to introduce the students to colleagues, guide them through the convention, and assist them with networking. Additionally, student participants were able to share their résumés with the program sponsors.

The students who had been selected to compete for scholarships presented during the conference in front of a live audience of transportation industry professionals. Each presentation

was followed by a question-and-answer session led by industry experts and program sponsors. ASBI had the distinct pleasure of awarding scholarships to Thomas "TJ" Costello, a graduate student from the University of Oklahoma, and Nuzhat Humayun Kabir, a PhD student from Texas A&M University, for their outstanding presentations. After competing, Costello said that having the opportunity to "present to a room full of so much knowledge was a huge honor," and Kabir expressed gratitude that ASBI was "providing students a platform to reach out to industry professionals."

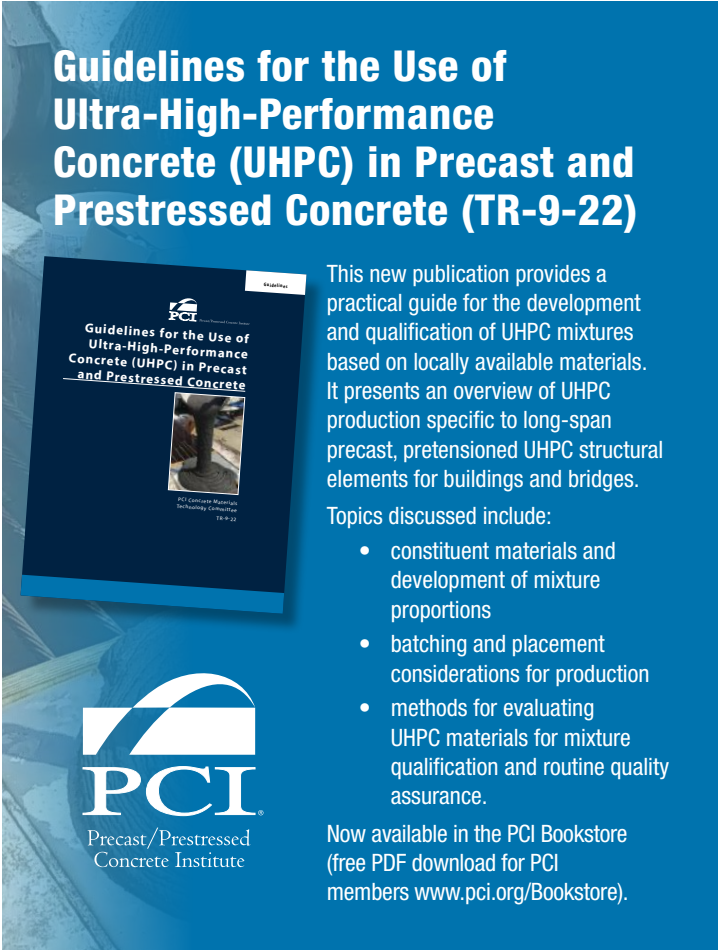
The goal of our committee is to continue to provide students with unique experiences and opportunities to connect with those in the transportation industry. It is also our hope that the effect we are having now will empower future engineers and leaders to positively affect others. We encourage everyone to reach beyond their immediate area of influence, knowing that they too can make a difference.

As a committee we considered our own personal stories. We considered not only fostered relationships but also acts of kindness from strangers. We recall myriad opportunities provided through learning/education, scholarship, and mentorship. Knowing the influence others have had on us renews our commitment to others. For this reason, my fellow committee members and I, along with ASBI, invite you to empower others to influence our future. Because if not us, then whom? And if not now, when? 

Jacob Martin is a project engineer with RS&H Inc. He has consulted on complex bridge projects across the United States, and he served as chair of the 2022 ASBI Student Program and Competition.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

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