

LA-UR-22-31525

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Title: My Journey to becoming a Process Engineer at LANL

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Intended for: Presentation for SAGE Journey Program

Issued: 2022-10-31



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My Journey to becoming a Process Engineer at LANL

Meagan Wheeler

November 12th, 2022

How'd I get into Process Engineering?

- I grew up in Nambe and attended Pojoaque Valley Schools
- Started off as a LAESF Scholar
 - This pushed me to get an internship at LANL
 - First generation student
- Completed my undergraduate degree at Northern Arizona University
 - In chemistry and mechanical engineering
- I was encouraged to pursue my masters by my former mentor and applied for a GEM fellowship
 - I was awarded the fellowship and attended Colorado School of Mines and received a degree in Metallurgical and Materials Engineering
- Upon graduating I began full time at LANL as a process engineer in the foundry

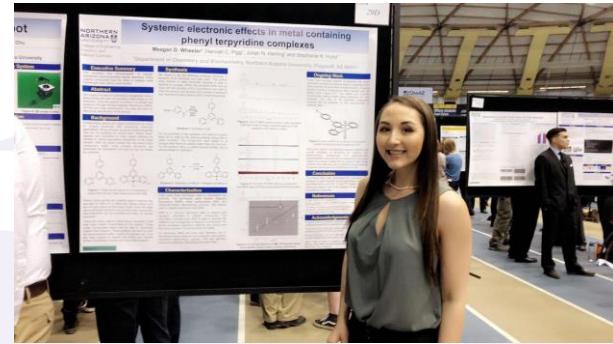


Figure 1: Undergraduate research symposium.



Figure 2: Graduation from Northern Arizona University.



Figure 3: Graduation from Colorado School of Mines.

A Typical Day in the Foundry

- Always start the day with a pre-job
 - We discuss what all we're going to be doing prior to the job occurring
- Half of my day is spent in the foundry processing plutonium
 - Hands on work with the technicians
- The other half of my day is spent working through data obtained from my process
 - This is completed so I can optimize my process
 - I also work through maintenance requests and train new engineers



Figure 4: Images of casting operations inside glovebox.



Figure 5: Images of casting operations.



Figure 6: Myself and the technicians.

My Inspiration

- My family
 - They've always pushed me to be the best person I can be
 - Encouraged me to pursue what I'm passionate about
- My mentors
 - Other women in STEM
 - Jere Freeh, Dr. Stephanie Hurst, Michele Decroix, Erika Esquivel.
 - Alonso Archuleta, Bill Peach



Figure 9: My undergraduate research team with Stephanie Hurst circled.



Figure 10: Michele DeCroix.



Figure 7: My dad and I at an awards banquet.



Figure 8: My nephew, sister and I at his high school graduation.

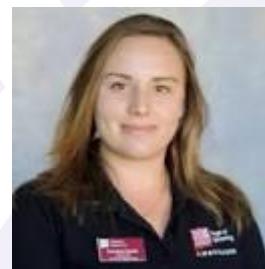


Figure 11: Jere Freeh



Figure 12: Erika Esquivel

Some Tips and Advice

- Explore your interests early
 - Looking back, it would have been nice if I had more time to develop my skills and see what I truly enjoy academically
- Make connections
 - Growing your network young helps a lot when you need help later in your career
- Go to the school you enjoy
 - The university I went to for undergrad wasn't prestigious, but I ENJOYED myself there and made connections I wouldn't trade for an experience at any other university

