



TMS volunteer face time



Advisor Role Has Its (Material) Advantages

Lynne Robinson



Kip Findley

Early on in his career, Kip Findley realized that serving as a Material Advantage chapter advisor could be supportive of his own professional development, as well as that of his students. “It’s an excellent way to interact with students and develop the community feeling that materials engineering departments can nurture,” he said.

Findley, Assistant Professor, Metallurgical and Materials Engineering, Colorado School of Mines (CSM), is marking his fourth year as a Material Advantage Advisor, and currently co-advises the CSM chapter with associate professors Gerald Bourne and Brian Gorman. Material Advantage is the student organization that provides access to the membership resources of four professional societies—TMS, the American Ceramic Society, the Association for Iron & Steel Technology, and ASM International. “I think the Material Advantage program does an excellent job of engaging students and providing opportunities for them. The cooperation of the four professional societies in achieving these goals is commendable,” said Findley.

CSM’s Material Advantage chapter is particularly active in its participation in professional society activities—It’s often viewed as the “team to beat” at the annual TMS Materials Bowl competition, for instance. “It’s energizing to see students get excited about something they see at a conference

or a visit with a member of Congress at Congressional Visit Days,” said Findley.

Findley’s favorite chapter-sponsored activity is an outreach event that CSM has hosted for the past two years for area

middle school students. “About 50 middle school students visit for a half a day to learn about materials engineering through hands-on laboratory activities,” said Findley. “The event requires significant organization and participation from the chapter and the department. It’s been very rewarding to see CSM students grow the chapter’s activities and engage even more students.”

The outreach generated by CSM’s Material Advantage chapter has likewise extended into Findley’s laboratory. Recently, Findley worked with a local teacher to develop a simple, small-scale mechanical testing frame and laboratory modules for middle school students. Some of those activities, in turn, have been implemented in the chapter’s outreach events.

These and other accomplishments earned CSM a Chapter of Excellence award at Materials Science and Technology 2013 in Montreal. While proud of his students’ efforts, Findley believes that his role as a Material Advantage advisor has added an important dimension to his own professional experience. “I think part of what makes education enjoyable is getting to know the background and interests of your students. This is sometimes challenging to do in a one hour lecture,” he said. “Participating in the Material Advantage program has enabled me to work with students on a more personal level, and that has helped me connect a little better with them in the classroom. Also, the students, through the chapter activities, have brought a lot of positive exposure to our department, and it’s been fun being a part of that.”

To learn more about Material Advantage, visit materialadvantage.org or contact Bryn Simpson, TMS Member Services Specialist, at bsimpson@tms.org.



Hosting an educational outreach event for local middle school students has been a signature activity for the CSM Material Advantage chapter.

