



**LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT**



Happy New Year,

I hope everyone is looking forward to an exciting 2026. Reflecting on 2025, I'm happy to say it was another successful year for the SME Foundation. Your generous contributions helped raise over \$1.6 M to support scholarships, mineral education resources and career development opportunities for students and SME professionals. Support comes from a number of areas and we are very

appreciative. The anchors for our support are our great Corporate Partners, but last year support from individual donors increased, as well as participation in SMEF events like the Gala and the two golf tournaments and additional donations from local sections and Divisions.

In 2026 the Foundation Board of Trustees and SME leadership look to maintain, enhance and grow our key programs and events. One of the key programs for the Foundation has been the PhD Fellowship and Career Development Grant scholarships. This effort has successfully supported our mining programs across the country by providing new PhDs and supporting faculty on their path to tenure. Currently SMEF is supporting eight scholarship awardees. Over the last 10 years, 27 awardees have received their PhD or tenure resulting in lowering the average faculty age by 15 years. The program is under review by the Education Sustainability Committee to ensure the emphasis and focus of this program is still on point to meet mining professional workforce challenges.

2026 is going to be a great year starting with the upcoming 2026 SME Foundation Gala Dinner, "Play with Purpose - A Game Night for Mining's Future", taking place on Sunday, February 22 in Salt Lake City. We look forward to seeing you there.

Andy Cole  
SME Foundation President

Please join the SME Foundation for its  
**Annual Gala Dinner and Silent Auction**

**PLAY WITH PURPOSE**

**A Game Night for Mining's Future**

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2026**

**Hyatt Regency Salt Lake City**

6:00 pm-7:00 pm | Cocktail Reception and Silent Auction

7:00 pm-8:30 pm | Dinner Program

8:30 pm-10:30 pm | Entertainment and Games

*Dress: Business and Cocktail Attire*



Sponsored by: **HEXAGON**



Buy your tickets or tables when you register for MINEXCHANGE at [SMEAnnualConference.org](http://SMEAnnualConference.org).

Contact the SME Foundation at [smefoundation@smenet.org](mailto:smefoundation@smenet.org) for additional information.

All proceeds go to benefit the SME Foundation and the programs it serves.  
[www.smefoundation.org](http://www.smefoundation.org)

**SME Foundation Leadership**

- |                            |                                     |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Andrew P. Cole</b>      | <b>President</b>                    |
| <b>Peter M. Haarala</b>    | <b>President-Elect</b>              |
| <b>Thomas C. Rauch</b>     | <b>SMEF Past President</b>          |
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| <b>Marc A. Herpfer</b>     | <b>SME Past President</b>           |
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## MEC IS SUPPORTING SME SECTIONS TO REACH OUT WITH HELP FROM THE GIMME FOUNDATION

By Rebecca Smith

This fall, SME Sections attended their state's science teacher conferences with MEC's support to share information about the importance of mined minerals. Volunteers provided information and materials at eight events across seven states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Kentucky, New Mexico, North Carolina,



*New Mexico teachers were interested in the free resources from MEC and discussing critical minerals and workforce issues with volunteer Rita Teal.*

and Utah. Thanks to an \$18,000 grant from the Gimme Foundation, they were able to distribute an especially rich variety of MEC materials, including posters, children's books and other classroom resources.

The grant money enables MEC to provide Sections with high-quality educational materials to share with teachers at their state's science teacher conferences. Like MEC, the Gimme Foundation strives to help educate the public regarding mining's importance and overall contributions to society. Teachers were tremendously appreciative of the free materials they received at these outreach events.

SME Sections, please look for opportunities to present to teachers and students in your state by attending your state science teacher conferences or other local outreach events. MEC may be able to help by paying for the booth fees and providing flyers and posters to give out at the event. Please contact MEC at [MEC@snet.net](mailto:MEC@snet.net) to let us know about the event and find out how your SME Section can participate in this outreach program!

## NATIONAL OUTREACH COLLABORATION (NOC) DISCUSSES WORKING WITH MUSEUMS

By Rebecca Smith

Dr. Pamela Pelletier, Community Outreach Professional for the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research and Education Consultant for the Alfie Norville Gem & Mineral Museum, presented at the National Outreach Collaboration (NOC) 4th Quarter virtual meeting on December 10. Her presentation, "*Mining the Museum: How Science Centers Power Informal Learning and Industry-Community Partnerships*," highlighted how museums engage audiences through educational program development that focuses on curiosity, experiential and hands-on activities, learner choice, problem-solving, social interaction and emotional engagement.

Dr. Pelletier emphasized that fun, exploration and play are essential elements of effective informal education. She also noted the importance of understanding diverse audiences, maintaining ethical practices in sponsorship and content balance, and conducting audience evaluation. Her presentation included several case studies that illustrated these principles in action.

Following her talk, attending mining and minerals educational outreach providers participated in an open discussion focused on the theme: "Museums and You: Share Success and/or Ideas for Collaborating with Local Science/Geology/Mining Museums." Participants shared local examples from their own outreach experiences.

Her presentation will be available soon on the National Outreach Collaboration (NOC) Community page in the SME Community.

The 1st quarter 2026 NOC in-person meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 23, from 1:30 – 3:00 pm in room 252 A-B of the Salt Palace Convention Center in Salt Lake City, UT, during MINEXCHANGE. The presenter will be announced soon.

## MEC PROVIDES FREE RESOURCES TO TEACHERS AT NATIONAL SCIENCE TEACHING ASSOCIATION IN MINNESOTA

By Rebecca Smith

MEC exhibited at the National Science Teaching Association (NSTA) Conference in Minneapolis, MN, in mid-November. Our amazing event volunteers distributed nearly 1,000 free rock and mineral kits, along with MEC educational materials and posters, to science teachers over the three-day conference. All 10 rock and mineral samples included in the free kit were sourced from Minnesota.

Thank you to the Minnesota Section of SME and to American Peat Technology for their sponsorship of this event. The rock Boxes would not have been possible without donations from US Steel, Calumet Reclamation Company, NewRange Copper Nickel, Talon Metals, American Peat Technology, NorthStar Manganese/Electric Metals, Cold Spring Granite and Big Rock Exploration for their rock and mineral donations.



*Volunteer, Gabriel Sweet, talks to teachers about mineral samples at MEC's booth*

## SME PE COMMITTEE PLANS FOR MINEXCHANGE 2026 AND TO STRENGTHEN MENTORING MODEL

By Andy Schissler



The SME Professional Engineers (PE) Committee continues to serve the 2,500+ SME members that are licensed. The Committee is drafting a proposal to submit

to the NCEES Foundation to fund license advocacy. 2026 marks the second year of this program.

The Committee also held an online mid-year meeting to discuss planning for MINEXCHANGE 2026, and license advocacy ideas. One of the decisions made was to distribute badge ribbons at MINEXCHANGE to students to encourage them to take the Fundamentals of Engineering Exam (FE) while in school. The ribbons will say, “FE Bound”. The FE is one of two exams they are required to pass, along with other requirements for licensure.

The idea for “Mentoring” as a satisfactory relationship between an Engineer-in-Training (EIT) and a licensed PE experience sign-off was approved by the States of the Union to be placed in the Model Rules for Licensure. This action will help EIT’s appropriate the experience when a PE is not a supervisor. It must be stressed that individual states govern the requirements for licensure, hence candidates need to check if their state will accept mentoring. Daniel Torres, PE has accepted the Chair position, and Dr. Bibhuti Panda, PE, has accepted the Vice Chair position for the upcoming Committee term.

## DR. YOUNES SHEKARIAN EARNS PHD FROM PENN STATE



Dr. Younes Shekarian recently earned his Ph.D. in Energy and Mineral Engineering from The Pennsylvania State University, where he developed a chemical-less process using ozone oxidative precipitation for the selective separation and purification of Co, Mn, Ni, and Zn from acid mine drainage (AMD). His research established a multi-stage recovery flowsheet validated on AMD and integrated into Penn State’s 7 GPM pilot facility. This work resulted in one patent

currently under licensing by Chevron studio and positioned AMD as a viable secondary resource for critical mineral extraction.

Younes was selected for the 2023 SME Ph.D. Fellowship and received the 2025 Rong Yu Wan Ph.D. Dissertation Award in Metallurgical Engineering, along with numerous other awards from Penn State. His Ph.D. studies, as both first author and co-author, resulted in nine peer-reviewed journal publications, thirteen national and international conference presentations, seven poster presentations and one patent. These results reflect both his primary research efforts and collaborative applied process development.

Dr. Shekarian aims to pursue a tenure-track academic career focused on advancing environmentally responsible hydrometallurgical technologies and scalable resource-recovery processes that reduce the environmental footprint of extraction and support a sustainable supply of critical minerals.

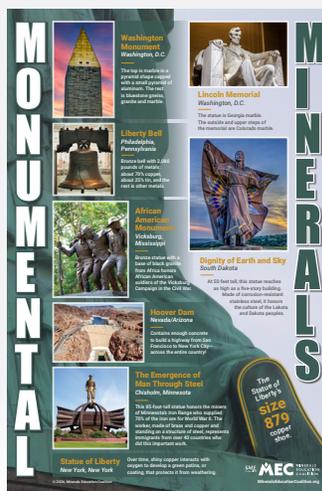
## MEC’S NEW MONUMENTAL MINERALS POSTER SPOTLIGHTS MINED MINERALS IN U.S. MONUMENTS

By Rebecca Smith

The new MEC *Monumental Minerals* poster showcases monuments from across the United States and the mined rocks, minerals and metals used to create them. Highlighting well-known monuments is an engaging way to illustrate the importance of mined materials to the public, and it also provides a great tie-in to this year’s celebration of the nation’s 250th anniversary.

The front of the poster features images of diverse U.S. monuments and describes the mined and processed materials used to construct them. The back of the poster includes several activities that teachers, parents, and grandparents can do with students. The “Build Your Own Monument” activity and the “Building Stones: Your Local Gateway to STEM” exercise encourage students to consider what monuments mean and to research the types of building stones used in their own region.

The multidisciplinary content of this poster includes science, social studies, history, geography, and art. It will be available for purchase in the MEC online store in February and will also be included for free in the AGI Earth Science Week Toolkits in the fall. Be sure to get copies this month to share with local teachers and students - and with your own children and grandchildren - at [www.MineralsEducationCoalition.org/store!](http://www.MineralsEducationCoalition.org/store!)





**The Foundation of the Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration**  
12999 E. Adam Aircraft Circle  
Englewood, CO 80112  
[www.smefoundation.org](http://www.smefoundation.org)



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- **Pg. 3**    PE Committee Plans for MINEXCHANGE, Dr. Younes Shekarian Earns Ph.D, MEC's New Monumental Minerals Poster

**THANK YOU!**

Thank you to our Corporate Roundtable Partners for their encouragement, support and assistance in creating a stronger industry around the world, developing tomorrow's professionals and leaders, and strengthening relationships within our communities. To find out more or to lend your support, please visit [smefoundation.org](http://smefoundation.org).

The central logo in the collage is the SME FOUNDATION logo, with the text 'Corporate Roundtable Partners' below it. Surrounding it are various corporate logos: Freeport-McMoRan (F-M), Newmont, Rio Tinto, South32, Equinox Gold, Fletcher Mining Equipment, Cannon, First Majestic Silver Corp., Schlamm, Core Natural Resources, Somerset International, Metso, Redpath, Vulcan Materials Company, Weir, Respec, Epiroc, and Jennmar.