

Kellie Farster, PE

Senior Associate, Project Manager
CREW DC
Champion Award

Career Development

Kellie Farster, PE is a Structural Engineer, Project Manager, and Senior Associate with Walter P Moore. Prior to joining Walter P Moore in December 2021, Kellie worked for SK&A Structural Engineers for over 10 years, and for Cannon Design in Buffalo, NY from 2006 to 2011. As a structural engineer, Kellie partners with Architects to develop building structural framework. She designs building structures to support the required code loads for wind, earthquake and gravity floor loading making sure that the framing coordinates with the architecture and functional needs of the space. Kellie juggles multiple responsibilities including structural engineering analysis, project management, and construction coordination for a variety of projects, including new structures and the expansion/renovation of existing structures.

Education

Before arriving at Hope College, Kellie had never heard of engineering. She knew that liked math, science, and working with computers. She thought about a career in computer programing, until meeting her freshman advisor who was also an engineering professor. He encouraged her to explore engineering by starting with a few classes. When Kellie received a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering from Hope College in 2002, she had already completed several mechanical and manufacturing internships that had convinced her to keeping looking at other types of engineering. Her next internship was in India for eight months with Engineering Ministries International (eMi), a non-profit that primarily designs schools, orphanages, and medical clinics in developing countries. It was through this internship that she fell in love with structural engineering, while working under other structural engineers and designing structures to resist earthquakes and save lives.

After returning to the U.S., she completed a Master of Engineering degree in Architectural Engineering from the Pennsylvania State University in December 2005 with a structural emphasis. In January 2006, she returned to volunteer work with EMI for an additional six-month stint in Uganda, West Africa.

Finding her love for structural engineering had occurred after several chance encounters with her freshman professor who first turned her towards structural engineering, a chance to attend a conference in Illinois where she first heard about eMi, and then the chance of being accepted in the Indian office with no background in structural engineering but was able to work with structural engineers. If any of these events had not happened, Kellie would not be a structural engineer today. These chance encounters have encouraged Kellie to share her love of structural engineering with as many students as possible, so that hopefully more students know about this rewarding field when they first show up to college.

Community Outreach and Service with Professional Organizations

While living in Buffalo NY, Kellie volunteered with youth programs such as the Architecture, Construction, and Engineering (ACE) Mentor Program and [Buffalo-Area Engineering Awareness for Minorities \(BEAM\)](#), where she strived to inspire high school students to pursue careers in engineering.

Soon after moving to DC, Kellie was influenced by her artist-parents to teach art classes for three years at the Anacostia Gracious Arts Program (AGAP). [AGAP](#) is a weekly after-school arts organization in southeast DC. This program worked with mostly elementary age students for a few hours every week and taught them how to draw, drum, dance, act, and sing. She also served on the AGAP board for a couple years to help fundraise for the program.

Kellie also volunteered with [ACE Mentors](#) in DC for three years, which is a high school program that introduces students to Architecture, Construction, and Engineering by working on conceptual projects that solve a community problem with a building and prepare a design to present at the end of the year. She worked with around 10 to 20 students each year to help them understand the design process, create models and plans of their ideas, and practice presentation skills.

After joining CREW DC in December 2018, she helped start the first CREW Careers program at [Phelps ACE high school](#) in January 2019. This monthly lunch club introduces around 40 girls to fields in commercial real estate. Kellie continued her involvement with this lunch program while serving as a CREW DC board member from 2021 to 2023. She is currently a co-chair for the student outreach committee, which oversees both CREW Careers and UCREW. UCREW is the college age outreach program with focuses on ways to get college students interested in fields related to commercial real estate. Kellie has helped organize and spoken at virtual UCREW events since 2020 and in person events since 2022 for students from Howard University, George Washington University, Georgetown, and American University.

Kellie currently serves on the Engineering Industry Advisory Board (IAB) for [DC's Career & Technical Education \(DC-CTE\)](#) which oversees [NAF Engineering Academies](#) at various high schools in DC. She has also participated in job shadow events and engineer fairs at McKinley, Dunbar, and Friendship Prep which have engineering & architecture programs related to commercial real estate.

Kellie began mentoring DC high school interns in 2020. Kellie developed a curriculum for them to learn valuable 3D modeling skills in Revit, an architectural and structural design software. Kellie continued her partnership with DC's CTE program for the last 5 summers and establish an expanded version of the program at Walter P Moore in 2022. Kellie created a cohort of 4 interns each summer who work and learn together. She recruited other engineers to help mentor and teach different aspects of the curriculum. Summer interns had the opportunity to attend local site visits, be mentored by college interns, and work on their presentation skills to share what they learned with the entire office. Students also created a portfolio of their work, which they can use to apply for future jobs. Kellie is always happy to share more about this program to encourage other companies to host interns.

There have been several former interns who expressed an interest in pursuing a career in structural engineering after the summer internship ended. Some interns from this past summer will continue to work with Walter P Moore this fall as part of the Advanced Internship Program (AIP), which is an academic year capstone internship model that places eligible high school seniors into *paid* and credit-bearing internship opportunities during the school year.

Internal Walter P Moore Initiatives

While setting up job shadows opportunities for all college and high school interns in the DC office, Kellie led and established a national intern program at Walter P Moore. She advocated to make it nationwide and did the research to gather resources and support for interns and their mentors. This program includes the following:

- [Kickoff meeting](#) with past interns who became full time employees to give tips and tricks for a successful internship
- Established a Teams channel specifically for summer interns to collaborate and receive nation-wide announcements.
- [Intern Bingo Mural board](#) where interns can share what schools they came from, interesting personal facts, and keep track of activities to help create a well rounded internship.
- Job Shadow Program where leaders across the country shared their experiences with around 30 interns in each session. Kellie joined each session to moderate Q/A and share intern program announcements, as well as managed the schedule for all speakers. See below for a list of topics and speakers.

Sarah Evans	Structures
Justin Jacobs and Morgan Slezak	Business Development + Marketing
Jamila Johnson	Water Resources
Heather Guillen	Civil
Beth Bryan	Parking/Traffic
Lydia Fielding and Betty Alba	Construction Engineering
Timon Hazel	Digital Practice
Amir Manafpour	Diagnostics
Dan Ashbaugh	Bridge/Transportation
Ryan Stanza/Scott Kinney/Becca Inzer	Secure Design
Jake Leventhal	Facades

- TikTok Style Video Contest: The students that submitted these won a cash prize for participating. Hopefully we have more students try this out next year.
 - [NYC Video](#)
 - [Atlanta Video](#)
- Closing meeting where interns shared highlights from their summer and share video contest results.

Other initiatives that Kellie has been involved with inside Walter P Moore include:

- Joining the Recruiting Planning Committee and helping develop standardized ways to evaluate candidates and try to remove bias from evaluating resumes with a points-based spreadsheet. This criteria was first used to evaluate candidates in fall of 2023 after several career fairs.
- Encouraging younger engineers to build networking skills by creating a monthly list of local events and inviting younger engineers to come network with her on projects and highlighting their involvement.
- Led company efforts at the National Building Museum's Big Build to inspire elementary age children to learn about structural engineering. Walter P Moore developed creative activities

including building marshmallow and spaghetti towers and seeing structural designs in wood, steel and concrete in a VR headset. She had led this effort for 2 years, before mentoring her replacement this year.

Additional Organization Commitments

Within the structural engineering community, Kellie currently serves on the Structural Engineers Association of Metropolitan Washington (SEA-MW) board. She has previously served as the Young Member Group Chair (2015) of SEA-MW after helping to form that group in 2013. While serving as YMG chair, Kellie helped start the first “The Next Step” event which is an annual event that encourages current structural engineering college students to learn more about the DC construction market and meet with local professionals. The [Next Step event](#) draws around 100 structural engineering students every year from around 20 local universities and colleges.

Kellie had led efforts for SEA-MW’s participating in [Rebuilding Together](#) for almost 10 years, which is a yearly event (usually in April) that helps fix homes for elderly residents in MD, VA, and DC. Kellie was able to mentor and then hand off planning responsibilities to the next generation of 4 structural engineers to continue to this great work. Kellie was also a founding member of SEAMW’s [SE3](#) (Structural Engineering Engagement and Equity) committee. She annually leads a book club on DEI topics, including the following books: *Color of Law*, *Heartbeat of Wounded Knee*, and *The Sum of Us*. Last Spring, she also led a discussion on the following video series: [The History of White People in America - YouTube](#). This year she is planning to read and discuss “Prospering in the U.S.: A Handbook for Immigrant Architects.” Kellie is also leading SEA-MW’s [Community Outreach Committee](#), where we hope to engage the structural engineering community in encouraging more students to consider this career path, and also help meet the communities needs through volunteering with local organizations.

Kellie has previously served on American Society of Civil Engineers, ASCE 7-22 Main and D+L Committees as a voting member, DCRA’s (now Department of Buildings) Construction Code Coordination Board (CCCB) as the Structural Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Chair, and on SEA-MW’s & NCSEA’s Structural Engineering Emergency Response (SEER) Committees.

Kellie mentored around 10 Hope College (Holland, MI) students with Engineers without Borders (EWB) for two years and travel to Ecuador in the summer of 2022 to help supervise students building a prowall around existing village school. This project was completed in 2023.