The Jerome Fisher Program in Management & Technology

Fisher Program in Management and Technology Alumni Spotlights

"Keep an open mind about what you are studying and see how you can combine your interests. You'll see crossovers in business, technology and social issues...Figure out what you have a sincere interest in...and you should be able see business and technology impacting that subject. Think about what your end goal is - don't be afraid to challenge the status quo and go in your own direction."
- Eileen McCarthy, M&T 2002

Eileen McCarthy offers these words to someone pursuing a career in the fields of business and technology, and she has certainly followed her own advice. As a junior at Penn, she decided that she wanted to be a practicing engineer and apply her business background to engineering decisions and problem solving by pursuing her Professional Engineering license (PE) in the field of environmental engineering. She found environmental engineering to be a "great mix of practical engineering problems with complex social and economic issues tied to it." With her goal in mind, she started down a career path that has led her to her current position as a Water Resource Engineer at Hazen and Sawyer in New York City, where she is doing formal design engineering that is necessary for her professional licensing experience.

Eileen has been involved with the mixture of business and the environment since her days growing up in Middletown, New Jersey. She was involved in the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) and Environmental Commission in her high school, and her later career choice can be seen rooted in her early interests and childhood in New Jersey, where she often saw environmental interests come into conflict with economic ones. Eileen states that "historically, businesses in New Jersey have polluted the environment because of either lack of knowledge about the impacts of what they were doing, or because it was the only economic choice they had. I wanted to know more about using technology to fix or prevent these problems in a financially reasonable way."

Her career aspiration led her to study systems engineering and environmental management at Penn, which "gave me a set of skills to approach these water resource issues that were highly impacted by economic realities;" Wharton courses taught her writing skills that she utilized frequently to write reports and marketing proposals. Eileen says that her M&T education prepared her for her desired career in the following way: "I work with a variety of emerging technology, most of which is developed to meet more stringent environmental regulations in water treatment. M&T gave me the knowledge to better evaluate these technologies for feasibility, economic practicality and long-term use in treatment facilities that are built for 30 years of continuous service."

Upon her graduation from Penn, Eileen worked at Schoor DePalma, a civil engineering firm in New Jersey that gave her the opportunity to work in water and wastewater engineering and incorporate business and engineering. She worked on projects that included finding cost-effective methods of treating wastewater in secluded rural developments, "creating a billing structure for large wastewater users in a municipality and determining a methodology for finding 'missing water' at a large refinery with old leaky pipes and a poor water accounting system." She moved to Hazen and Sawyer in Manhattan last winter and has been working on large water treatment plant design for the City of New York and private companies around the northeast.

Eileen has plans to further her education after she attains her Professional Engineering license. She plans to get a Master's or a Ph.D. in Environmental Management or Sustainable Development. Eileen feels that her "engineering background should give [her] a unique perspective and set of tools necessary to evaluate major problems in how we treat our environmental issues and solve them using economically feasible methods."

Eileen currently lives in Manhattan and is engaged to fellow Penn Engineering alum Jason Feldman.