

# Former Student SPOTLIGHT



Master of  
Industrial Distribution  
COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING



## **Dawn Ellis**

*MID Class 2019*  
Buyer/Accountant  
ZEON Chemicals

## **Dee Ellis**

*MID Class 2015*  
International and Domestic Technical Planner  
ZymeFlow

## How did graduating from the MID program affect your professional careers?

**Dee:** A few years after graduation, I transitioned from operations into international and domestic technical planning. The program helped me gain a greater understanding of the relationship between the differing departments and their effects on one another.

**Dawn:** I have kept my same role in purchasing, accounting, and backing up our logistics team. The MID helped me get a better understanding about our shipping processes, as we are owned by Zeon Corporation in Japan, and I buy many of our raw materials from our sister plant there and have to ship them or air freight them to us. It also gave me more perspective on how to work with my suppliers for our plant and helped me to develop a better vendor rating system than what we were currently using.

## What are the benefits of holding a MID in your current positions?

**Dawn:** The MID increased my confidence in handling all kinds of situations from profitability to supply chain and logistics. My role has expanded to include more responsibility, and my managers recognize me for that. Since I have this fuller understanding of the company, I am often looked to as someone who can communicate well with suppliers and vendors and step in when unexpected things might happen, especially since I work at a smaller company.

I've even had the opportunity to guest teach in undergrad A&M ID classes, which has given me some ideas for working post-retirement. Overall, the MID has been very personally fulfilling and enhanced my skillset by building on what I already knew.

**Dee:** The program changed my perspective and gave me a more diverse skillset. Moving from a tactical position to a more strategic position gives me a more overarching perspective (30,000-foot view). Most technical planners have basic operations experience and operate in the tactical realm, whereas the knowledge gleaned from the MID program gave me new insight. Since I understand not just products, but process, I am actively called upon to support other areas such as sales and operations.

The MID improved my ability to speak the languages of many departments, engineering, operations, sales, logistics and warehouse teams.

## What were the outcomes of your capstone projects?

**Dawn:** For my capstone, I researched the value of building an on-site warehouse versus our current off-site warehouse and determined how it would improve logistics. It's given me an in-depth look that has helped me gain leverage when talking with our off-site warehouse professionals and asking for what we need from them using what I've learned about supply and shipping processes. Though we weren't able to implement the new warehouse, all the research is still there and waiting. I was also selected to present it at an industry ACME conference.

**Dee:** My capstone examined the value of starting a hot shot trucking service that would charge premium prices for expedited delivery services. Ultimately, my research and background into the inner working of the oil and gas industry helped me explain why it wouldn't be effective, due to the then environment in the petrochemical industry at the time. The process was a valuable look at the problems that smaller distributors may face in similar circumstances.

## What was the benefit of working in your cohort? Do you still keep in touch with classmates?

**Dawn:** Most of the people in my class were salespeople, so I was often able to give a different purchasing perspective in assignments and discussion board topics, while also hearing from the other side of the supply chain. Working together helped me learn more about dealing with different personalities. It made it easier for me to let go of some control in my professional life and rely on others for help, and it helped me communicate better with my coworkers.

**Dee:** We have kept in contact with several members of my class. Mainly due to the friendships that developed, but also to discuss business ideas and share advice.



## What drew you to the Texas A&M MID program over other educational opportunities?

**Dee:** As someone who also holds an MBA, I would advise others in the distribution industry to skip the MBA and go straight to the MID. Because an MBA opens you up to so many career paths, it's not always beneficial for someone looking to advance within their specialty. The MID keeps a tight focus on distribution-specific training.

Two other perks of the MID were that it didn't require me to take the time to get my GRE or GMAT, which I had already done back in the '90s for my MBA, and it worked around the demands of my job.

**Dawn:** It was a personal thing for me. I was accepted to A&M in high school but chose not to go at that time. I finished my bachelor's degree elsewhere, but still wanted a degree from A&M and an Aggie ring. I wanted to go back to school and get a master's degree, but I didn't want an MBA or a master's degree in accounting. After Dee started the MID program, I saw how it would apply to everything I do in my job with supply chain, profitability and logistics, so it made perfect sense.

The fact that it's an online program also meant it didn't take up every night and weekend and I could manage it while working full time. I could study and complete classwork on my own time with the MID's structure and flexibility.

## How did the MID help you think globally?

**Dawn:** Our parent company is in Japan, and I purchase numerous raw materials from one of our sister plants there. The MID helped me better understand the background of logistics and shipping and air freight when it comes to my work in international purchasing.

**Dee:** The biggest takeaway from the MID is the closer connection that the world has throughout the supply chain. I am tasked with international as well as national technical planning. My advice, just to enhance others in an international role, would be to study and respect other cultures.

## What advice would you give new MID students?

**Dee:** Prepare yourself for around 10 hours of schoolwork a week and block off times to study around your work schedule. It's a good idea to build your group around the personality assessments you take at the beginning of your first residency week. This will help the significant amount of group work run much smoother. It is a rigorous program, but it's also very rewarding and is definitely an attainable goal even while working full time.

**Dawn:** Take each semester one at a time and learn to adjust for the varying workloads. Depending on your advisor and your capstone timeline, your third semester might be extremely busy or your fourth semester might be extremely busy, but stick with it – you will be fine.

## What was the best part of the MID experience for you?

**Dee:** I have nothing but good things to say about the program. I enjoyed all the professors; they're all personable, engaged, and do a great job of dealing with each individual student and making everyone feel special.

Whether you're looking for professional advancement or personal enrichment, what you'll learn in the MID program is beneficial no matter what part or kind of business you're in – every job in the United States has a place in the supply chain. I highly recommend the MID program and will cheer on any student looking into it. Just look me up if you need encouragement or just a cheerleader. That goes for me and my wife.

## What's it like to have two MID's from Texas A&M in one family?

**Dawn:** I wouldn't recommend getting the degree at the same time as your spouse! Different personalities work in different ways. If we had done it at the same time, we might not have had much time to spend together. But I enjoyed being able to go on Dee's global trip to India and form great relationships with other couples in his class.

**Dee:** I've been an Aggie fan from the time I was a little kid. I was accepted to Texas A&M for my undergrad, but we started our family just prior to that so I ended up at a university closer to home. Having never lost that love for A&M we raised our children to be Aggie fans as well, dressing our daughter and son in A&M gear as infants. Both kids Jordan (2010) and Cameron (2013) ended up attending A&M and graduating with their bachelor's degrees before we both got our master's degrees there.

**Dawn:** We actually kept Dee's acceptance to the MID program a secret at first. Some of the MID program workers heard that and asked Dee if they could make the announcement to our kids at the MID tailgate that year. When they announced his acceptance and ring ceremony date to the kids a few months into his program, they were so excited. They were excited all over again for me when I was able to announce to them that I got accepted into MID as well. At my ring day, it was so awesome to have my husband, both of my kids, and three of my grandkids in attendance.

