

# Developing Industry Connections That Last a Lifetime

With help from the ACI Foundation and its supporters

**G**rowing up, Caleb Stevenson always knew he wanted to build things. Having one grandfather as a general contractor and the other grandfather a welder, Stevenson knew he wanted a career where he could work with his hands.



Caleb Stevenson

Caleb Stevenson is the ACI Foundation's 2022-2023 recipient of the Burg-Coleman Iowa State '77 ACI Fellowship and is currently studying at Iowa State University, Ames, IA, USA. When Stevenson stepped foot on the Iowa State University campus as a freshman in 2019, he began his undergraduate classes in civil/structural engineering but quickly realized he wanted even more hands-on experience. Stevenson took it upon

himself to reach out to the manager of the structural engineering research laboratory and asked for an opportunity to work in the lab. He was hired, and this was the start of his first hands-on experience with concrete.

"My job was essentially placing all of the concrete and building the formwork for all of the graduate students," Stevenson stated. "I would work with a couple of other students, and we would build the formwork for the concrete, from backing the truck and operating the crane, from start to finish."

Through his job opportunity at the lab, Stevenson met one of his most significant mentors, Satish Jain. Stevenson helped Jain to fabricate wooden formwork, assemble hydraulic systems, and ultimately mix and place for his PhD dissertation. As they worked on the project, Jain would discuss his experience running his consulting business with Stevenson and all of the new possibilities for innovative concrete opened up.

"Jain and I had the type of mentoring relationship where

we had to do a lot of repetitive tasks together. We would sit for hours at a time talking. During one of our many conversations, he urged me to pursue a relationship with Sri Sritharan, who in turn introduced me to the ACI Foundation."

## Getting Involved with ACI

At the advisement of Sri Sritharan, FACI, Stevenson applied for the Burg-Coleman Iowa State '77 ACI Fellowship with the ACI Foundation. His first experience with ACI and the ACI Foundation was in the spring of 2022 at the ACI Concrete Convention in Orlando, FL, USA.

Stevenson was invited to the ACI Concrete Convention in Orlando to interview as a finalist for an ACI Foundation fellowship with the ACI Foundation's Scholarship Council. After his interview, Stevenson was also able to sit in on his first ACI committee meeting for ACI Committee 551, Tilt-Up Concrete Construction, and also attend the student lunch.

"Attending the committee meeting for ACI Committee 551 was important and informative because I am now working in tilt warehousing," said Stevenson. "The student lunch was a great event because it was my first opportunity to meet and interact with other students at an ACI function."

After Stevenson was notified that he had received the Burg-Coleman Iowa State '77 ACI Fellowship, he received a phone call from Jeff Coleman, ACI Past President and one of the two founders of the Fellowship.

Coleman invited Stevenson out for lunch, where they discussed Coleman's involvement with the ACI Foundation, his past presidency with ACI, and the upcoming ACI Concrete Convention in Dallas, TX, USA.

Stevenson described how significant it was for him that, while in Dallas for the ACI Concrete Convention, Coleman took him under his wing, introducing him to important industry connections, inviting him to committee meetings, and attending networking events with him.

“Jeff really went out of his way to walk me around at the convention. Everywhere we went, he would point out meetings I could attend,” said Stevenson. “He even rode the bus with me to the concrete mixer, walked me around, and introduced me to literally everyone he knew. It was a super meaningful experience.”

Stevenson went on to identify how hard it can be to walk into an ACI convention without the context of who the people are, what’s it like, and what’s happening at the moment. The amount of time Coleman put into walking him around different events and introducing him to various people really solidified the experience and gave him a firmer idea of what was happening and how to navigate it.

When asked about his time with Stevenson at the ACI Concrete Convention in Dallas, Coleman shared similar sentiments and encouragement for Stevenson and all future industry leaders like him.

“I have been incredibly impressed with Caleb’s drive and enthusiasm. In many ways, he reminds me of myself at that age (although I think his GPA is higher). I predict Caleb will be an influential member of ACI someday,” said Coleman. “Our job is to encourage people like Caleb to stay involved. I enjoyed spending time with Caleb in Dallas. Even though that was now 43 years ago, I can recall how daunting the first ACI conventions can be and wanted to do what I could to break down the real or perceived barriers to first-time convention attendees.”

### Next Steps for the Future

Stevenson is completing the last year of his undergraduate degree at Iowa State University this spring and will be starting a position as an entry-level structural engineer for ARCO Design/Build, a warehousing general contracting company which he had previously interned with.

“ARCO recently added a structural department to the office in Houston, TX, which is where I will be working,” Stevenson stated. “As an entry-level structural engineer, I will be drafting warehouse developments, doing all of the engineering for these warehouses.”

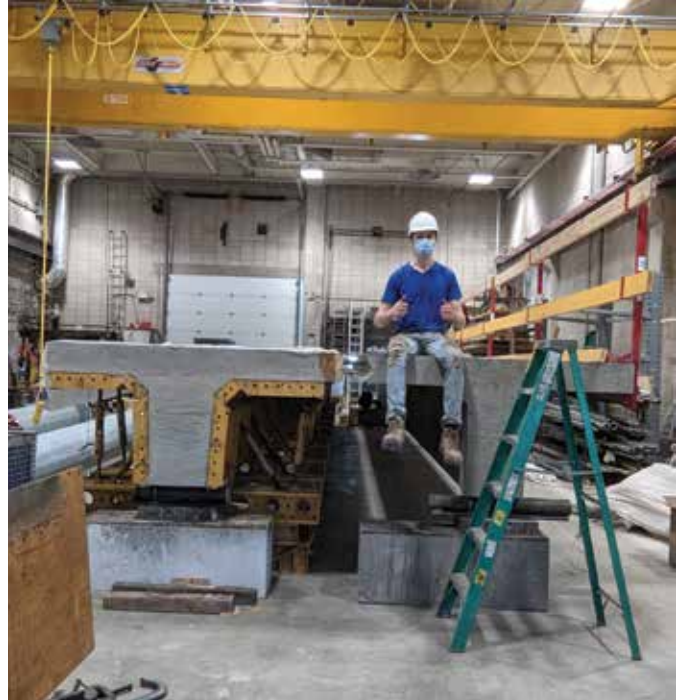
Stevenson is also looking forward to continuing expanding and developing relationships with ACI members and leaders and continuing his involvement with ACI Committees.

### Impact of an ACI Foundation Fellowship

Each year, the ACI Foundation fellowship program awards more than \$200,000 annually to students to both further their studies and help them gain professional exposure to the concrete industry.

“Being able to go into a career and not to worry as much about my financial situation makes things a lot more comfortable,” said Stevenson. “It also makes it more financially manageable to be involved with ACI in the future because there is a lot less concern with paying back student loans.”

The ACI Foundation relies on funding from ACI and from ACI members, partners, and friends. Supporting upcoming



Stevenson in the Wallace W. and Julia B. Sanders Structural Laboratory on Iowa State University’s campus

leaders like Stevenson is an investment in the future of the concrete industry.

“The Burg-Coleman Iowa State ‘77 ACI Fellowship recognizes the two institutions key to my success—Iowa State University and ACI,” said Ron Burg, ACI Executive Vice President and Co-Donor of the Burg-Coleman Iowa State ‘77 ACI Fellowship. “There is no better way to ‘pay it forward’ than funding a Fellowship.”

An ACI Foundation fellowship made an impact on Stevenson’s life and education. He is certain to continue making an impact on the world around him. To learn more about ACI Foundation scholarship and fellowship opportunities, visit [www.ACIFoundation.org/scholarships](http://www.ACIFoundation.org/scholarships).

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