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Back to School

WE ARE APPROACHING the end of the summer, and like many of you, I am unpacking from family vacations, getting excited for football, and prepping for upcoming IIBEC fall meetings and events. Most important of all, I am helping my kids transition to the new school year. During these hectic days, I'm sometimes jealous of those of you who are empty nesters. But I also suspect that even if you don't have kids in school, you might feel a charge of excitement at this time of year. When we see ads for back-to-school supplies and watch students getting ready to return to classes, we tend to think about our own education—the parts we liked, the parts we didn't, the opportunities we were offered, and the opportunities we wish we had. In this context, I think we can be really proud of what IIBEC is doing to help students and younger workers succeed in their education and their future careers as building enclosure professionals.

Many conversations among our branch and chapter leaders and other IIBEC members circle around one pressing problem: our most expert employees and long-time local IIBEC leaders are "aging out" of the profession, and it is difficult to recruit and retain people who are qualified to be the next generation of building enclosure consultants.

Exposing younger individuals and students to the building enclosure sciences is one of the best ways to get tomorrow's leaders interested in and excited about building enclosures. With this in mind, the RCI-IIBEC Foundation and RCI Foundation Canada provide opportunities for students to attend IIBEC continuing education events such as the 2024 IIBEC/OBEC BES and the 2025 IIBEC International Convention and Trade Show. The foundations sponsored 22 US students and 10 from Canada at our Phoenix convention in March, and they have invited 39 students and 1 instructor to BES this month. They aim to sponsor around 35 students to attend the 2025 convention.

The foundations also offer academic scholarships to help undergraduates and graduate students studying construction or building sciences, architecture, or engineering with their college/university expenses. In

2024–2025, four students received the \$5,000 Robert W. Lyons scholarship, and four received the \$2,500 RCI Lewis W. Newlan scholarship. You can learn more about these efforts (and donate to support them) at <https://rci-iibecfoundation.org> and <https://rcifoundation.ca>.

In addition to the good work of our foundations, many of our chapters help students by arranging lectures about building enclosures for engineering and construction classes at local universities and colleges. This is another great way to expose these younger individuals to our profession and its many rewards.

Each of us can do our own part to reach out to young people and workers who are just starting out in their careers. Tell your kids, grandkids, and neighbors' kids about what you do, why you like it, and why they might, too. Discuss the foundations' scholarship programs with any students that you know who are in engineering, architecture, or building or construction sciences. If you are in management, make sure your employees know about IIBEC's continuing education offerings and the benefits of earning credentials from IIBEC. If you meet a talented young person while working on a project in the field, take a few minutes to let them know that you're impressed with their work and think they have the potential to become a building enclosure expert. Invite them to a local IIBEC chapter meeting or point them to the IIBEC website for more information.

As you engage with students and young workers, listen closely to how they respond. If they express interest in a career in our profession but have concerns about potential roadblocks in their way, you or IIBEC might be able to help them overcome their challenges.

I encourage every IIBEC member to think about the future of the building enclosure profession and do what you can to educate and mentor young individuals who could be part of that future. In the words of one of my favorite cartoon characters growing up, G.I. Joe, "Knowing is half the battle!"

Robért Hinojosa

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