

Donor Spotlight: Keith Kesner's Commitment to the Concrete Industry and the ACI Foundation



Kesner

In the realm of concrete advocacy and innovation, Keith Kesner emerges as a distinguished figure, renowned for his role as a committed donor and Trustee of the ACI Foundation. Currently working as a Project Director with Simpson Gumpertz & Heger, his career exemplifies the impact of mentorship, community involvement, and educational advancement within the concrete industry.

Recently, the ACI Foundation had the opportunity to engage with Kesner, discussing his journey, the driving force behind his support for the ACI Foundation, and the reasons he believes others should join him in effecting change.

Beginning in the concrete industry and ACI

Kesner's story began with a simple passion for construction. "I had an undergraduate degree in engineering, and during that time, I was more intrigued by the construction aspect than engineering itself," he shared. During his undergraduate years, he worked for a custom home builder in Fairfield County, CT, USA. The hands-on experience Kesner gained was valuable, but a pivotal moment arrived when the contractor's lack of work forced him to explore new avenues for employment during winter break. This led Kesner to a temporary position with an engineering firm, marking the true beginning of his journey in the concrete industry.

"My first experience at an ACI Convention in 1994 was a significant milestone," Kesner recalled. "I presented a case study on post-tensioned construction and met industry giants for the first time. It was a great experience connecting with others who shared my passion."

Kesner's involvement with ACI deepened as he pursued further education at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA, where he was encouraged by mentors like ACI Past Presidents Ken Hover and Richard White to get involved in various technical committees, notably focusing on concrete repair and rehabilitation. Over the years, he has taken on numerous leadership roles, contributing to essential documents like the Concrete Repair Code, assisting in ACI code advocacy, and collaborating with key figures in the industry.

The Foundation's impact on the industry

When asked about his initial awareness of the ACI Foundation, Kesner admitted, "Before I got involved, I didn't know much about it other than there were fellowships available." However, after working closely with Ann Masek,



ACI Foundation meet-and-greet event at the ACI Concrete Convention in Boston, MA, USA. From left: Sarah Al Adgham, Habibelrahman Hassan, Paul Acuña, Keith Kesner, Bayezid Baten, and Colin Boyle

ACI Foundation Executive Director, and other dedicated volunteers of the Foundation, Kesner discovered the profound impact that the ACI Foundation had on fostering future talent in the concrete industry.

"The most compelling aspect of the ACI Foundation for me is the student fellowships and scholarships it offers," Kesner expressed. He highlighted the vital role that financial support plays in enabling students to attend ACI Concrete Conventions, network, and focus on their education without financial burdens. "Seeing the joy and gratitude on the faces of students who receive these fellowships is incredibly rewarding," he added.

Reflecting on his motivations to contribute, Kesner shared that his first donation was in memory of Dan Falconer, a respected professional in the ACI community. "Dan was such a wonderful person, and losing him was a significant loss for everyone involved in ACI. Supporting a fellowship in his name felt right," he recalled.

Kesner emphasized that donating to the ACI Foundation allows individuals to contribute to tangible goals rather than abstract concepts. "When you donate, you're supporting a specific cause that has a direct impact on students and our industry," he said. "It's fulfilling to know that your contributions are making a real difference."

For others considering donating to the ACI Foundation, Kesner accentuates the importance of knowing where funds go: "People want to see the results of their contributions. The Foundation provides a clear vision of its impact, especially the percentage of students remaining in the industry after receiving support."

Kesner's journey reflects not only his personal achievements but also the collective growth fostered within

the ACI community and the ACI Foundation. As an industry advocate, his dedication shines, reminding us of the importance of mentorship, support, and giving back to ensure the future of concrete continues to flourish. Kesner's story underscores the value of being involved, both as a contributor and an advocate for the essential work of ACI and the ACI Foundation in shaping the next generation of concrete professionals.

Kesner aims to inspire others to recognize the importance of supporting the next generation of professionals in the concrete field. As he aptly said, "What we do matters—let's keep pushing the boundaries and creating opportunities for future leaders."

Concrete Innovation Forum Presentations

Join the ACI Foundation at the Concrete Innovation Forum in Denver, CO, USA, from August 12 to 14, 2025. This event is hosted by the ACI Foundation's Concrete Innovation Council (CIC). The agenda for this year features six presentations, four technology showcases, and three panel discussions.

Technology showcase topics

- Early Application of Biochar in Concrete through Stakeholder Education and Buy-in;
- Bio-inspired Material Innovations;
- Reducing Clinker Content Using Blended Type IL Cements and Calcined Clays; and
- The Partanna Story – Development and Use of MgO Activated Slag Concrete.

Panel presentations

Innovations and Opportunities of Nonmetallics in Concrete

Jerzy Zemajtis, Executive Director for NEx: An ACI Center of Excellence for Nonmetallic Building Materials, will introduce this growing segment of the concrete industry. Four technology owners will then provide 15-minute presentations of innovations or needs for innovation related to the use of nonmetallics in concrete, such as the current state of fiber-reinforced polymer couplers. Following the presentations, there will be extended time for a discussion and Q&A between the panelists and forum attendees moderated by Zemajtis.

Project Success Starts with Design Phase Collaboration

This mini panel will highlight how design-phase collaboration leads to project success. Presentations will highlight the viewpoints of the designer, developer, and producer. Cary Kopczynski will lead the discussions by presenting how design-phase collaboration leads to project success. Kopczynski's career-long efforts to advance the

industry were recognized by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), which recently awarded him with an Outstanding Projects and Leaders Award (OPAL). A brief discussion session will be moderated by Patrick Frawley, CIC volunteer and Director of Quality Assurance for the Western Division of Vulcan Materials Company.

Current Landscape of Tools to Lower Embodied Carbon

In 2019, forum attendees were introduced to the Embodied Carbon in Construction Calculator (EC3). EC3 was one tool being developed to help the industry understand and act on embodied carbon data. This mini panel will discuss how the EC3 and other tools are used today to design and produce concrete mixtures with lower embodied carbon content.

Featured presentation

Structural Innovation – The Story of the Populus Hotel

The Populus was created by Urban Villages in response to its founder's mission "to bring nature back into cities." That vision led them to a durable design using concrete. They partnered with Holcim US and The Beck Group, a large integrated design-build firm in the United States. The structure was made to reflect the design of the aspen tree (*Populus Tremuloides*), an instantly recognized and beloved symbol of Colorado. The project used Holcim's ECOPact™ low-carbon concrete mixture. Learn about the design and build of this sustainable concrete structure.

Plan Your Legacy

Have you thought about the advancement of the concrete industry in the years to come? The ACI Foundation programs focus on building the future of the concrete industry and rely on organizations and individuals like you who want to pay it forward and give back to the industry that you helped advance and for which you have a passion.

- A gift to the ACI Foundation is an opportunity to invest in the next generation of leaders, new technical knowledge, and innovation.
- A gift to the ACI Foundation as part of your financial plan, whether through your estate, will, donor-advised fund, cash, stocks, bonds, insurance, or other retirement assets, will carry your technical legacy into the future of the concrete industry.

It's never too early to plan your legacy. To start the conversation, contact Kari Martin, ACI Foundation Fundraising Manager, at +1.248.848.3757 or kari.martin@acifoundation.org.