



THE ASSOCIATION & VOICE OF THE US SEWN PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

## **SEAMS' Networking Conference passes the 'vibe check'**

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Those of us who participated in the SEAMS Fall Conference got an amazing educational experience, seeing the full process of the textiles industry under a single roof during the respective tours of NC State University's Wilson College of Textiles and Cotton Incorporated.

As many of you in the material development community may be fascinated by the later design process, or 3D prototyping, many like myself in the product development division are equally fascinated by seeing the beginning of the process where fiber becomes yarn and finally fabric. It's amazing to see our many diverse roles in this manner, and to gain a better appreciation for each part of the complex process of bringing textile products to life. I think everyone was equally blown away by the PyroMan™ demonstration at the Textile Protection and Comfort Center at NC State. PyroMan™ is a fully instrumented, life-sized manikin used to evaluate the performance of thermal protective clothing. [The video](#) is great but does NOT do it full justice.

The educational amuse-bouche was just what we needed to whet our appetites for the multi-course meal that was the rest of the conference. Many agreed this was one of the best agendas yet – it was full of compelling speakers and stories. Each conversation, panel and speaker went deep into their topics – giving us a lot to think about and take home.

Like the tours, we were fully immersed in the industry from farm and fiber to final product – to extending the lifecycle of the products we make to create true circularity, and looking to our future as we navigate complex trade and governing issues, production and development challenges while honoring and celebrating our rich legacies, and all the people involved as we forge forward.

Speaking of our future – we had a large group of senior and grad students from NCSU's Wilson College of Textiles as our guests in the audience for the first time. For most of them, this was their first industry conference experience, and, I'd say we passed the "vibe check." I saw and experienced great conversations during networking breaks between talks, cards exchanged and, come Spring, I'm sure we'll get reports from our members updating us to new summer interns or job placements as a result.

We also had a number of first-time attendees and new members, and I know people left with amazing new connections and a feeling of belonging. I can say from my own experience, as well as from the perspective of an adjunct college professor, that these personal touch points make a big difference. The professional friendships I have made here with this group compel



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me to keep coming back. And it's why we'll hopefully see many of these fresh faces again, along with their many fresh ideas.

In the last blog, I asked you to open your doors – this time I implore you to take on a mentor role with someone – maybe within your organization, maybe outside or maybe a student. Organize time for them to shadow your workday, answer their questions, gain a better understanding and inspire them to be the leaders of tomorrow. The earlier you can make a strong impact on someone, the more likely they are to want to stick with this industry.