

FEATURED FACULTY INTERVIEW

Kim Huguenard, Assistant Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering



What is the best or neatest, most exciting or most important thing you have discovered about UMaine since your arrival?

I think probably the best thing I've discovered since I arrived is that there is this sense of acceptance on campus; being sensitive to diversity. You don't really hear a lot of that on other campuses so it is really a pleasant surprise.

What do you wish you had known before you arrived at UMaine?

I don't know that it would have helped knowing before I arrived but I think I just didn't anticipate how busy I would be with all the different things pulling in different directions. I'm not sure it would have helped to know this before I arrived but it's definitely surprising.

Have you encountered any drawbacks or advantages as a woman either in your training or your career as a scientist?

I have encountered bias being in a historically male-dominated field, but you learn how to overcome situations like that. I think what's really encouraging is that I feel like it is changing. With the younger generation coming into tenure track positions and people becoming more accepting of different kinds of people and programs, it's a positive outlook.

Do you have any coping strategies you use when you sense biases?

I tend to lean on my support system at home, and chat with my father or friends going through the same thing. They coach me to look at it in a different way.

Would you say that mentoring has been critical to your success, and perhaps influenced your career choice?

I knew that this was what I wanted to do but there were challenging times when I kind of doubted if I could do it. My PhD advisor played a role by talking with me about how to

navigate certain situations. It is good to get perspective from people who have already been through it, or something similar. At UMaine, I have two mentors – one in the department and one outside the department. I feel lucky because I have a friend at another university and she does not have that kind of support system.

What advice would you give to other women pursuing a career in science, STEM fields or engineering?

Persevere through the challenging times; believe in yourself. Work hard and know that you are good enough to be whatever you want to be.

