

My Marine Technician Career Path

by Anastasia Elmendorf (2022 MATE Intern)

R/V Neil Armstrong

While still an undergrad in a marine biology program, I planned on continuing that path into research, working briefly at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution as a lab assistant in the Geology and Geophysics dept. However, upon graduation in May of 2020, in the thick of uncertainty during the pandemic, I decided to postpone applying to graduate programs. I instead picked up a temporary position working as a substitute teacher in my local school district.



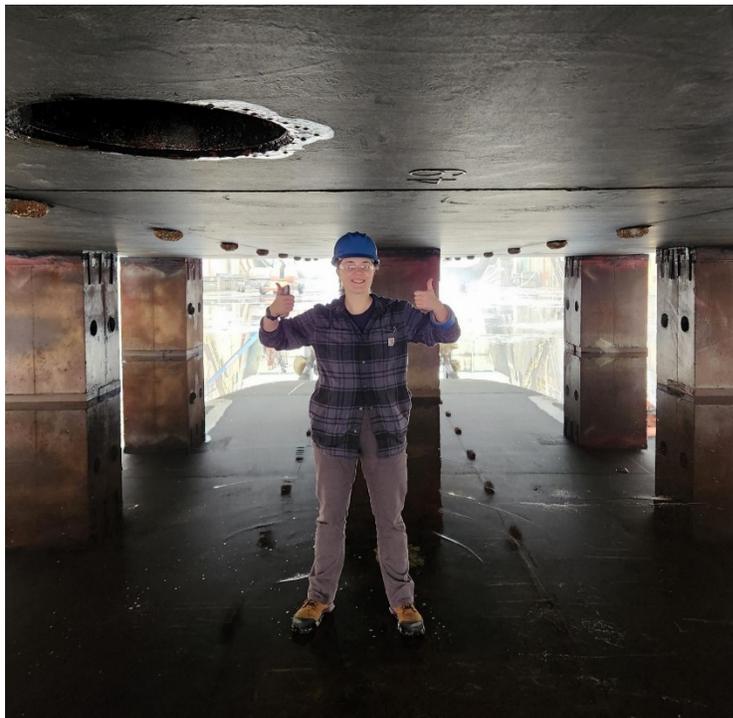
After working there for two years, the school was starting to seem claustrophobic, and while I enjoyed teaching, I also knew it wasn't a job I wanted to make into a career. About the same time that I began looking into graduate programs again, I received a life-changing email from the scientist at WHOI I had worked for as an undergrad, where she forwarded the information for the MATE Internship application, explaining that a career as a technician might be a different path for me into the research community.

The internship that placed me on the R/V Neil Armstrong would jump start my career in the marine technical field and change my life entirely. The intense and immersive experience with my mentors aboard the Armstrong allowed me to experience the lifestyle of the ship and I realized that I fit in quite well. The work was much more challenging than anything I had done up until that point, and with the added dose of responsibility for ship equipment and data collection, the job was overwhelming at first, but the satisfaction at the end of a successful cruise made it all feel worthwhile.

As my comfort with the work increased, I was next sent over to the R/V Atlantis, to put all my new skills to the test. This is where I've spent most of my time this past year, and the increased challenges that Atlantis brings have truly made me into a better technician. The schedule is intense, and the operations are very different than aboard the Armstrong, but I wouldn't have it any other way!



I must shout-out and thank my amazing mentors on the Armstrong, Emily Cheung and Sonia Brugger, for the amazing experiences shadowing them for weeks and their encouragements to continue in the tech field. Without such a wonderful experience as an intern and all the awesome people I met along the way, I definitely wouldn't have a full-time position at WHOI as a marine tech today!



Standing under the R/V Neil Armstrong during drydock as a newly-minted technician in Feb 2023.





Aboard the R/V Atlantis prepping for a CTD cast in April 2024



Aboard the R/V Atlantis running the CTD winch during a cast in July 2024.