

## My Marine Technician Career Path by Sarah Gisler (2024 MATE Intern)



My interest in the ocean was inspired by my mother who from the time I was very young, regaled us with tales of diving in Indonesia and insisted that we get our PADI certifications. Vacations spent diving and exploring in the ocean led me to the University of Maine (UMaine) in Orono to pursue a bachelor's in marine science. When I graduated from UMaine, I didn't have a clear idea of how to apply my degree, so I tried marine science education and aquaristry on Catalina Island off the coast of California.

During that time, I was blown away by the sheer beauty of the kelp forests and loved the technical aspects of taking care of an aquarium. My favorite part of the job was diving to collect organisms for the aquarium and I was sure I wanted my future



career to be in the field somehow. I would have continued the aquaristry track to the Seward Marine Sealife Center if not for COVID. During COVID, I took the opportunity to return to school and entered a



program at Boston University that would result in a master's in mechanical engineering. In a classic case of what doesn't kill you makes you stronger, I emerged from the program with a mental state a little worse for wear, confident in my ability to

push myself through trying circumstances, an ability to not be fearful of being bad at something, and a need to get the heck out of the classroom and back into the field.

I found the MATE internship online and applied. I was rejected three times but kept throwing my name back in with the hopes that someone would want a candidate with more engineering experience than research experience, of which I had very little. Amazingly, I found my way back to Seward and I was chosen to intern with the Sikuliaq because they wanted a candidate with machining experience. I did two months of shipyard work in Seward, AK during the winter, in sometimes negative temperatures, turning bolts and replacing a whole multibeam system with freezing hands. It was the best thing I've ever done. Then, I was able to sail during the calibration cruise to test the new multibeam system I helped install. I was fortunate enough to be able to return as a full marine tech later that year and sail on two more cruises. Afterwards, I was hired as a full-time coring technician with the MARSSAM group out of Oregon State University having not cored at all but with a great recommendation and having asked many questions during my interview. I recognize there is much I still do not know, but I am excited by how much I learn every day and look forward to being a lifelong learner.



My advice to people entering this field is to stay curious, don't be afraid to not know things, be vocal about not knowing things because that's the quickest way to learning those things, work hard, keep a positive attitude, and be someone you would want to work with.