

Margaret Hunter ('02) is all about water efficiency

Margaret (Jacques) Hunter was born in Voorhees, N.J. and grew up in Winslow Township, N.J. Her father is a retired teacher who taught technology education at Berlin Community School. He went to Glassboro State College (before it became Rowan University). Her mother was a postal worker, also retired. Margaret has two older sisters. One went to Rowan (Physics undergrad and Engineering Management Master's degree with Electrical Engineering emphasis) and works for Verizon in Berlin. Her other sister started her career as a dental assistant (and still does it part time), then obtained a Liberal Arts degree at Rowan and works full time as a Guidance Secretary at Ann Mullen Middle School.



Margaret graduated from Rowan in 2002, part of the third class. While at Rowan, she interned at the Cherry Hill Township Engineering Department one summer. The other summers she worked for Dr. Jahan in research and the Attracting Women into Engineering (AWE)¹ workshop.

Margaret started full-time at American Water in Voorhees just two weeks after graduation. American Water provides clean drinking water and treats wastewater for approximately 1,700 communities in 14 states. She started as an engineer in the planning department, conducting master planning studies. Her first study was in New Mexico, projecting future water demand and identifying reliable sources. She immediately realized the need for water conservation as aquifer levels decline, something that is still a big issue in the U.S.

Margaret is now an Engineering Manager in the Asset Planning department at N.J. American Water, a subsidiary of American Water. She leads several initiatives: sustainability and resiliency planning; functional leadership for planning, including master planning studies, which recommend capital projects such as new treatment plants; and plant rehabilitation and regulatory compliance. Her personal mission aligns with her work mission: ensuring we have enough water by increasing or maintaining water supply and reducing water demand. She is passionate about water efficiency! Margaret led the American Water effort to write an environmental sustainability goal related to water efficiency for supply and demand. At N.J. American Water, she gets to implement projects to meet those goals.

Margaret is busy outside of work raising two boys. She hopes to get them interested in archery, a favorite activity she learned from her father. She has fond memories of national field archery association outdoor tournaments, walking through woods, selecting arrows, and releasing them at different targets.

I was good at science and math. My father encouraged me to pursue engineering at Rowan. I went to a Rowan open house in the (then) brand-new Rowan Hall and loved it. Rowan was also close to home. I mostly commuted.

I was always interested in Civil and Environmental Engineering. It seemed like the most helpful type of engineering, designing the infrastructure of our communities. The first-year Engineering Clinic² classes and my love of the outdoors and water got me interested in Environmental Engineering.

I started working for Professor Jahan almost right away. I asked questions in class which got her attention. She asked me to work for her, doing lab research on the occurrence of non-ionic surfactants in wastewater discharges and mentoring middle school students through AWE. Working with Professor Jahan and other students on a research project was great. We submitted a paper to a conference in California and I got to go. What a great experience. I was exposed to the water industry and heard technical presentations, all the things going on in water research. So many problems were being solved. It influenced what I wanted to do for a career.

My time at Rowan was wonderful. I learned a lot from the faculty, staff and research projects. It helped me figure out my career path. The Senior Design class was run by Anthony Basil and Suzanne Chiavari from American Water. They had a position available and reached out to Professor Jahan who recommended me. I took it from there.

Based on an Interview with Jess W. Everett on February 7, 2024.

1. AWE (Attracting Women into Engineering) is a four-day, non-residential summer workshop igniting a passion for STEM in middle school girls through hands-on projects, exciting demos and tours of real engineering labs. Professor Jahan founded AWE and Margaret was one of the first mentors.

2. Engineering Clinic is a hallmark of Rowan University. Students take a Clinic class each semester, eight total. Many are interdisciplinary. All are hands-on. First-year Clinics focus on engineering's place in society and fundamental engineering skills. Sophomore Clinics merge communication coursework with an engineering design experience and are team taught by engineering, writing arts and rhetoric faculty. Junior and Senior Clinics give students to work in teams an opportunity to work on research or design projects, usually externally funded.