While studying for his bachelor’s degree in materials science at the University of Washington (UW), John Morris knew he had to stretch himself. “I made a conscious decision to get involved with ASM. I knew it would challenge me in leadership and management skills—something I was not practiced in.”

That decision paid off. At age 29, John is a Materials and Process R&D Engineer with Boeing, where he has worked since graduating in 2006. He is currently working production start-up in Japan with Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, fabricator of Boeing’s carbon fiber reinforced plastic wing structure on the new 787-9 Dreamliner.

In college, John was president of the UW Material Advantage chapter and involved in the ASM Puget Sound Chapter. He was energized by going into high school science classes to give demos and “tell them materials science exists—and it’s cool!” Before his work with ASM, John had not been involved in formal volunteering. “But I felt a connection to giving back. I didn’t know materials science existed until my junior year of college when everything clicked… it saved me from mechanical engineering! I felt compelled to tell people about it, and ASM was my outlet.”

“In ASM, the leadership development was helpful, learning to manage and get students involved, and talking to people in the industry for guidance,” says John. “Going to the conferences was huge, very eye-opening, and gave me early career guidance.”

In 2011, John was honored as the first recipient of the ASM Emerging Professional Achievement Award. He also helped initiate the Young Engineering Professionals of Puget Sound, a collaboration of several technical professional societies.

John appreciates the networking and continual education in ASM, but sees a challenge in getting young people involved, especially without the employer’s sponsorship.

“It’s too easy to not be involved…the benefit you get out of ASM is a reflection of what you put into it.”