

# Getting to Know AACCI: Elena De La Peña

AACC International members each have their own story, and we want to highlight all of their amazing accomplishments—both in AACCI and in their careers. “Getting to Know AACCI” is a series of member interviews capturing the unique stories of our many volunteers and their journeys with AACCI.



Elena De La Peña  
Ingredion, Inc.  
Member for 5 years

**Q: What is your current position and what are you currently working on?**

**A:** I am currently working at Ingredion Inc. as an associate in the Bakery & Snacks Global Applications group. My main focus at Ingredion is on managing and leading all the activities related to the gluten-free bakery and snacks portfolio.

**Q: When and why did you first decide you wanted to work in cereal grain science?**

**A:** I decided I wanted to work on cereals during the exchange year I spent in the Cereal Science program at North Dakota State University, in Fargo, ND. There, I learned about the role that cereals and their by-products play in the food industry, and the possibilities in this field of study to develop a professional career. Thanks to that experience, I decided to pursue my Ph.D. degree in cereal science at the same university.

**Q: When did you first join AACCI and why?**

**A:** I joined AACCI back in 2011 to be able to present my work at the annual meetings and to connect with other students and professionals from different universities and companies and expand my professional network.

**Q: Why did you decide to volunteer with AACCI, and what committees/boards are you currently serving on?**

**A:** I joined the AACCI Student Division in 2013 to serve as the chair of the Product Development Competition for the 2013–2014 term. I decided to join the Student Division because I thought it would be a great opportunity to gain lead-

ership and social skills, to gain exposure to the cereal science community, and to create bonds with other student members. I am currently serving as the secretary-treasurer of the Engineering & Processing Division, and I am a member of the Pasta Products Analysis Committee. I also have participated as a judge for different student competitions that take place during the annual meetings.

**Q: What have been the most exciting moments of your career or membership experience so far?**

**A:** Some of the most exciting moments I have experienced as a member of AACCI were when I was chosen as a finalist in the Best Student Research Competition in 2013 and when I received the Anheuser Busch/Campbell Taggart Fellowship in 2014.

**Q: What have you learned from your membership in AACCI?**

**A:** Being a member of AACCI has taught me the value of sharing science and interacting with others to shape my professional career. Thanks to my AACCI membership, I have met a lot of new people in the cereal science field—many of whom I can now consider as good friends. Also, thanks to the networking opportunities I've had while attending AACCI Annual Meetings, I was able to create the contacts that led me to my first professional role after graduating from school. Because of that, I will always be thankful for the opportunities given by AACCI to recent graduates and young professionals like me.

**Q: What's next for you?**

**A:** I want to continue being involved with AACCI for as long as my professional career allows me to help this organization, so I can keep on giving others the opportunities that were given to me.

Do you know someone who has dedicated significant time to AACCI and the field of cereal grain science? Let us know!

We will be conducting interviews with members to be featured in future issues of *Cereal Foods World*.

Contact [lmcginty@scisoc.org](mailto:lmcginty@scisoc.org) if you or someone you know should be highlighted.