

editor's note



LAST WEEKEND MY DAUGHTER AND I ROAD-TRIPPED through southern Illinois checking out colleges (I can't believe she's already a senior in high school!).

Deciding on a school is tough. It's not just the objective criteria but also the intangibles. It's easy to see if a school has the program she's interested in. It's easy to look at statistics on graduates getting jobs. But it's tough to decide if the program is really the right fit for her. One school we visited has an almost perfect academic program for her. But another offers the type of welcoming environment in which she's sure to thrive—and which will create memories and friends for the rest of her life.

Selecting courses as part of your continuing education is a lot like choosing a college.

If you're just interested in getting a degree—in getting enough credits to graduate—it's easy. And getting CEU credits is equally easy. There are tons of programs out there. You often don't even have to pay for continuing education credits; vendors regularly offer continuing education just for showing up.

If you're specifically interested in training, then online programs may be your best bet. AISC's Night School programs (www.aisc.org/continuing) offer a rigorous program designed to teach you a specific topic. Want something a little less deep but still valuable and interesting? AISC has a long list of webinars available.

But if you're interested in a total education experience, there's no substitute for a high-quality conference. And AISC has you covered with the 2015 NASCC: The Steel Conference (www.aisc.org/nascc). The disadvantage of attending a conference is that it takes time away from your family and office. And it adds costs (not just the registration fee, but also hotel and plane tickets—and you'll probably need to eat at some point too). But the benefits can be equally great. Beyond the wide range of technical sessions

is the opportunity to talk to industry leaders, your peers and the people developing the specifications you use every day.

Hang out after the session "Stability Design of Steel Buildings" and meet Larry Griffis, who literally wrote the book on stability design. Or go to the session "Weld Details—Good, Bad and Ugly" and talk with Duane Miller, who (of course) wrote AISC's Design Guide 21 on welded connections. And they're just two of the hundreds of experts speaking at the conference.

Just as important is the opportunity to talk with other designers, fabricators, erectors and detailers. It's an opportunity to find out how other people are dealing with the same problems that you're dealing with back at the office.

Also, don't neglect the trade show portion of The Steel Conference. With nearly 200 vendors, you can talk with everyone from steel producers to software suppliers, from the people who make direct tension indicator washers to the people who make machines that cut steel like butter. It's all there.

Of course, there's one more parallel between a conference and college: the conference dinner. The 2015 conference is in Nashville and the memory-making party is being hosted at a series of honky tonks. 'Nuff said.

Registration opens December 2, and I encourage you to register early (fees increase each week). To view the advance program and to register, simply visit www.aisc.org/nascc.

I hope to see you in Nashville!

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