

## WAAIME Chair Column

# Amplifying WAAIME's Impact

As I step into the role of WAAIME Chair, I am energized by the opportunity before us. Barb Filas's leadership has been exceptional, and it is a privilege to step into this role following Barb's impactful leadership. I am grateful for the opportunity to continue the important work she led and championed, including the development of the WAAIME operations handbook.



**Jaqueline Herrera**  
2026 WAAIME Chair

WAAIME has a long and proud history of supporting students, empowering volunteers, and supporting the mining industry, and now is the moment to amplify that impact even further. My vision for the coming year is simple and powerful: expand WAAIME's reach, deepen our influence, and support the next generation of mining professionals. We will do this by engaging more students, building stronger connections, and partnering closely with industry leaders who share our

commitment to education, investing in future generations, and resource development.

WAAIME's work is only possible because of the dedication of our volunteers, the generosity of our supporters, and the passion of the students we serve. This year, I am committed to growing our volunteer base especially within the Scholarship and Marketing & Communications Committees so that more voices, ideas, and talents can help shape our future. Join us.

We will continue strengthening our scholarship programs, expanding outreach to high schoolers with our 'Careers that Rock!' program in multiple universities, and enhancing our digital presence to expand our outreach. We will also focus on refining our guidance documents and operations handbook to ensure transparency, continuity, and strong governance for years to come.

Most importantly, we will continue to champion the values that define WAAIME. I am honored to lead this incredible organization and excited for what we will accomplish together. Let's make this a year of meaningful collaboration, and lasting impact for students and the mining industry.

Let's move forward with purpose and let's do it together. ■

## WAAIME at MINEXCHANGE 2026

by Jaqueline Herrera, 2026 WAAIME Chair

During the MINEXCHANGE 2026 SME Annual Conference & Expo, WAAIME made a powerful and highly visible return. Our booth became a hub of activity and networking, enabling us to reconnect with so many students, academics and companies supporting the organization. We introduced WAAIME to a new generation of students and professionals. This renewed presence was made possible by the dedication of Elizabeth Freeman, veteran members Lydia Hull and Iris Owen, and an exceptional team of student volunteers. Their enthusiasm and professionalism set the tone for a standout week.

### WAAIME Executive Committee opened the door to new members and volunteers:

**Strengthening governance and leadership continuity.** This year, three of WAAIME's five Executive Committee (EC) members reached their commitment time. In order to ensure leadership continuity, WAAIME hosted a division orientation meeting on February 21. During this session all 2025 and incoming 2026 EC members attended, along with several interested attendees. The agenda provided a comprehensive grounding in WAAIME's history, strategic planning, domestic and international scholarship programs, Careers That Rock! initiatives, outreach activities, and



officer responsibilities. This proactive approach ensures that incoming leaders are well prepared to guide the Division forward.

In addition, WAAIME held its 2026 Business Meeting and Financial Review, reporting strong progress across all four strategic pillars during MINEXCHANGE 2026. ■



## Student networking reception;

# A standout event at MINEXCHANGE

by Jaqueline Herrera, 2026 WAAIME Chair

The Student Networking Reception has become a hub for students, scholars and companies to have fun, network and win prizes. This year, it drew more than 300 attendees and showcased the energy and diversity of the next generation of mining professionals. WAAIME's Selfie Tag Contest was supported by 12 exhibiting companies (Knight Piésold and Co., G+ Plastics, McLanahan Corporation, Polydeck, Austin Powder, Costmine Intelligence, Process Technology, Inc., Roxsyle Systems LLC, Pocock Industrial, Becker, Allonnia, and Rema Tip Top) and featured 20 student teams and 57 participants who put in their best efforts to win. The contributions funded by several companies provided contest prizes and giveaways at the reception. Gift cards were awarded throughout the evening, and the winners of the Selfie Tag Contest were announced:

### Selfie Tag winners

- Fourth place – Team OLSONSEN, South Dakota School of Mines
- Third place - Team Golden Burros, Colorado School of Mines
- Second place – Team Fresh Miners, University of Kentucky
- First place – Team WAAIME Warriors, Colorado School of Mines

WAAIME extends sincere appreciation to the companies whose sponsorship made this event exceptional:

1. Title sponsors: Energy Fuels Inc., Hecla Mining Company
2. Supporting sponsor: Newfields
3. Sponsors: Behre Dolbear, Brooks & Nelson, Knight Piésold and Co., NexGen Resources, Orla Mining, U.S. Gold Corp., Windward Consulting LLC

Their generosity elevated the networking opportunity, atmosphere, and overall experience. ■

## Investing in students and the future of the industry

The Scholarship Committee met in closed session to finalize domestic scholarship recommendations for the 2026–2027 academic year. During the subsequent all committees meeting, the past scholarship chair presented the committee's recommendations, and the EC approved \$339,500 in scholarships to 164 students at U.S. universities.

This meeting also marked the ceremonial passing of the gavel from the 2025 EC to the 2026 leadership team. Incoming Chair Jaqueline Herrera outlined the priorities for the coming year: Amplify WAAIME's impact on students and the industry, emphasizing



**1st place Selfie Tag team WAAIME Warriors, CO School of Mines, with WAAIME leadership. Jaqueline Herrera, Dillon Barnes, Carson Richardson, Lanie Smith, Thomas Dowd, and Amy Richins.**



**2nd place Selfie Tag team Fresh Miners, University of Kentucky, with WAAIME leadership, Amy Richins, Daniel Hyland, Avren Zimmerman, Jaqueline Herrera and Ryan Dunn**

volunteer recruitment to join the committees, strengthen the scholarship program, and leverage the operations handbook to ensure governance, transparency and organizational continuity.

### International recognition

A highlight of the week was the recognition of WAAIME's Peru Section, which received a prestigious President's Citation from 2025 SME President Bill Hancock, an honor that reflects the section's exceptional commitment to student support and professional



## Honoring our past leaders; Welcoming the next generation

WAAIME expresses deep gratitude to the outgoing Executive Committee members whose leadership has shaped the Division's success:

- Margie Mansanti, 2025 Past Chair – A driving force behind the 2023 Omnibus Resolutions and a guiding influence in WAAIME's transformation.
- Lydia Hull, Scholarship Chair (1996–2025) – A champion for thousands of students and a pillar of institutional knowledge.
- Susana Palomino, International Chair (2023–2025) – An advocate for international scholarship programs and student development in Latin America.

We also welcome our incoming leaders—Kathleen Tew (Chair Elect), Pamela Swendseid (Scholarship Chair), and Mayerling Zambrano (International Chair) — who step into roles with significant impact and opportunity.

### Amy Richins elected Chair-Elect-Designate and other calls for nominations

On Sunday, February 22, the WAAIME Executive Committee chose Amy Richins to be Chair-Elect-Designate; she will officially join the executive committee at its Annual Meeting in late February 2027. Amy brings a wealth of experience as a mining engineer, educator, and safety advocate, excelling in both industry and academic settings. She is currently Communion Commercial and Engineering Manager for Weir Minerals and a visiting professor at Montana Technological University's Mining Engineering Department. A member of SME and its Health & Safety Division, Amy is also a member of WAAIME, playing an active role in our 2024 Strategic Planning process and successfully



**Amy Richins**



**Amy Richins, 2028 WAAIME Chair; Steve Gardner, AIME Past Chair; Mayerling Zambrano, 2026 International Chair; Susana Palomino, 2025 International Chair; Mary Korpi, 2026 SME President; Iris Whinnen-Owen, 2026 WAAIME Founders Award Recipient; David Kanagy, past SME CEO; Barb Filas, WAAIME Past President; Missy Russell, SME CEO; Bill Hancock, 2025 SME President; Lydia Hull 2025 WAAIME Scholarship Chair; Margaret Mansanti, WAAIME Past Chair; Jaqueline Herrera, 2026 WAAIME Chair; Pamela Swendseid, 2026 WAAIME Scholarship Chair; Kathleen Tew, 2027 WAAIME Chair; Theodosia Uhrie, WAAIME member**

coordinating our Selfie Tag Contest in 2025 and 2026.

In the past, WAAIME announced nominations for its Executive Committee in the Spring Newsletter. However, during the Midyear 2025 meeting and as described in the Fall 2025 Newsletter, the committee decided to shift the call for nominations to the executive committee to the Fall Newsletter. This adjustment allows new volunteers more time to get ready for leadership positions within WAAIME. From now on, all calls for executive committee nominations will appear in the Fall Newsletter. ■

### Call for volunteers

The WAAIME Division is currently accepting applications for the following positions:

- \* Marketing/Communications Subcommittee
- \* Scholarship Subcommittee

Find more information at

<https://www.waaime.org/VolunteerPositions.aspx>

## 2025/2026 WAAIME Scholarships

by Pamela Swendseid, WAAIME Scholarship Chair

The 2025/2026 WAAIME scholarship cycle is nearing its completion and this year a total of \$339,500 was awarded to 164 students from 19 universities across the United States. A further analysis of the recipients showed that 64 percent were working toward their bachelor's degree and 36 percent were in a master's program; this is supportive of one of WAAIME's goals to help students graduate and start working in the mining, metallurgical, petroleum, and other extractive industries.

The WAAIME scholarship reviewers are a crucial part of the whole process and we had a total of 20 reviewers conducting interviews and sending in recommendations. We are always looking for new reviewers and if anyone is interested for next year's cycle, please send an email to

[waaime@smenet.org](mailto:waaime@smenet.org).

As this scholarship cycle nears its completion and I step into the Scholarship Chair role for the next three years, I would like to take a moment to thank Lydia Hull for all her passion and guidance during the transition. She has worked tirelessly over the last several years to make the scholarship process more accessible to students through our website, organize and orient all the volunteer reviewers, and coordinate all the numerous administrative duties throughout the year. I am honored and excited to lead the scholarship committee and continue to support the students in their academic journey and on to careers in the extractive industries. Line-Audrey Nkule will continue as Scholarship Co-Chair. ■

## Founders award presented to Iris Whinnen-Owen; A call for 2026 award nominations

by Barb Filas, WAAIME Past Chair

The 2025 WAAIME Founder's Award was presented to Iris Whinnen-Owen at the MINEXCHANGE Women of SME Breakfast on Tuesday, Feb. 24. This recognition was long overdue, as Iris played a pivotal role in WAAIME's history. Eighteen years ago, Iris and retiring SME Executive Director Dave Kanagy spearheaded the initiative to merge WAAIME into SME. It was especially meaningful that Iris was honored during Kanagy's final annual meeting and was able to be part of his retirement celebration.

Her award citation highlights her remarkable WAAIME career: "A dedicated member since 1972, Iris has been a driving force behind WAAIME's evolution and enduring legacy. Her visionary leadership during the merger with SME ensured WAAIME's values and mission would thrive for future generations. As WAAIME Chair, mentor, and advocate for students in the extractive industries, Iris has shaped the organization through decades of service, strategic insight, and unwavering commitment. Her historical knowledge, candor, and passion for WAAIME make her a truly deserving recipient of the Founders Award."

Congratulations once again to Iris for her exceptional leadership in helping to establish the WAAIME Division within SME.



**Iris Whinnen-Owen receives 2025 Founder's Award from 2025 WAAIME Chair Barbara Filas.**

the International Award will be given at an appropriate Latin American event.

### Call for Founder's Award Nominations

Established in 2014, the WAAIME Founder's Award recognizes individuals who have rendered exemplary service to WAAIME and its goals. This honor is given to those who have made significant contributions to a local WAAIME Section, committee, or in furthering the goals outlined in WAAIME's incorporation or by advancing the Vision and Strategic Goals of the WAAIME Division. Click here <https://www.smenet.org/professional-development/awards-competitions/award-recipients/waaime-founders-award> to view past recipients and nominate an individual for the Founder's Award by July 1, 2026. ■

### WAAIME Founder's Award update

As announced in the Fall 2025 Newsletter, the WAAIME Executive Committee has approved the addition of a second Founder's Award, specifically to honor the contributions of International Section members. Moving forward, WAAIME will be able to present two Founder's Awards each year: one to a U.S. member and one to an international member. The U.S. Award will continue to be presented at the MINEXCHANGE SME Annual Conference & Expo, while



## WAAIME Lima-Peru;

# Empowering tomorrow's leaders

by Susana Palomino – Vice President and Scholarship Director

Over the past six months, WAAIME Peru engaged scholars in leadership development, technical training and industry immersion. These initiatives reflect WAAIME Peru's continued commitment to preparing future leaders for a responsible and sustainable mining sector.

### Leadership and coaching workshops

On Sunday, Oct. 5, 2025, 22 of our scholars — originally from Lima, Cajamarca, Arequipa, Junin and Cusco — attended the 24th Leadership Coaching Workshop. Held at the facilities of the Peruvian Institute of Mining Engineers (IIMP), this gathering aimed to strengthen their leadership and effective communication skills. It was a meeting full of inspiration, learning, and connection that marked the beginning of two unforgettable days with WAAIME. Former scholars also participated in this enriching experience.

On Monday, Oct. 6, they participated in various training sessions alongside renowned companies from the mining and energy sector, where they were able to learn firsthand about the experiences, challenges, and advice shared by distinguished industry leaders.

The first training session was led by METSO, featuring presentations by Ing. Pablo L., commercial director, and Michel Carlo Agama, sales manager.

The second session was conducted by Ing. José Palomino, representative of TOMRA, where participants learned about sorting solutions.

Our scholarship recipients were deeply grateful to all of them for opening their doors, sharing their knowledge, and motivating them to continue growing and striving to achieve their goals.

The day concluded with a special visit to Orica, where our scholars engaged directly with leaders from different areas: Harold Forsyth Sommer (general manager), Martin Kósa Muñoz (legal manager), Ivana Gracia Dominguez Mel (regulatory advisor), Florencia Díaz Mailhe (human resources manager) and Nilton Eduardo Champa Morales (technical services manager).

### Outstanding presence at COMINCA

In the second half of November, WAAIME Peru participated in the National Mining Congress of Cajamarca (COMINCA). We are especially proud to highlight that this event was organized by our own Cajamarca scholar, Ever Jeferson Vergara, who demonstrated exceptional leadership skills.

During the three-day congress, we set up an institutional booth where our directors, Mayerling Zambrano and Susana Palomino, presented the benefits of our scholarship program. We interacted with many earth sciences students, sharing our purpose of continuing to foster leaders who transform the country.

On Jan. 18, 2026, scholars from different regions



**Section scholars participating in leadership and communication training during the October 2025 Coaching Workshop in Lima.**

participated in a new intensive training day in Lima. As part of the program, they attended the 25th Coaching Workshop, titled “Selection Processes in Times of Change,” held at the IIMP and focused on enhancing key competencies for entering the job market. In the evening, the group shared a dinner accompanied by our assistant, Nancibel Vargas.

On Jan. 19, the technical immersion continued with a guided tour and four technical talks at COES SINAC, providing an up-close look at the operation of the national electrical system.

The learning cycle was completed with two masterclasses: “Responsible and Sustainability-Committed Mining,” led by Eng. Johanna Illanes from Sociedad



**WAAIME Peru representatives engaging with students at the National Mining Congress of Cajamarca (COMINCA).**



Minera Cerro Verde / Freeport-McMoRan.

To conclude the day's program, they attended a talk titled "Reality and Challenges of Mining Projects in Peru," delivered by Ing. Carlos Alarco, Latin America Regional President at Bechtel. This session provided an opportunity to reflect on the challenges, opportunities, and

responsibilities within the mining and energy sector.

We extend our gratitude to the institutions, partner companies, and professionals who made this formative experience possible, reaffirming WAAIME's commitment to developing young talent and strengthening a more responsible and sustainable sector. ■

## WAAIME Torreon-Mexico; Forging the future in the mining sector

by Rocio Hermosillo de Velasco – President

The Torreón Section continues to support student development through scholarships, technical training, and community engagement.

With the same commitment and enthusiasm that has characterized us from day one, the 20 members of the Torreón Section continue working diligently. Our main driving force and objective remains the comprehensive development and well-being of our young students.

### Scholarship program: Supporting local talent

Our coordinator in this area, Mrs. Beatriz Sánchez de Berumen, performs an exceptional job working directly with our eight current scholars, a talented group made up of five women and three men. We are proud to share that our students are developing their professional training at outstanding regional institutions:



**Scholars attending the Automation of Concentrator Plant Processes masterclass in January 2026.**

- Two scholars at the Tecnológico de la Laguna de Durango.
- Three scholars at the Universidad La Salle (ULSA).
- Three scholars at the Tecnológico de la Laguna de Torreón.



**University Pride: Celebrating our scholar Germán Didiher Molina Ortiz on earning his degree in Mining and Construction Engineering in December 2025.**

### Continuous training for scholars

Technical development and industry connections are pillars of our program. Therefore, our coordinator Concepción Cortés de Vázquez, in synergy with Eng. Aurelio Trejo (Corporate IT and OT Manager at Grupo Peñoles), organized an excellent learning opportunity.

This was the masterclass "Automation of Concentrator Plant Processes," held on Jan. 29, 2026. This important lecture was delivered by experts from the Process Control Department of Minas Peñoles:

- Eng. Víctor Ramírez
- Eng. Enrique Vázquez
- Eng. Luis Gerardo Ornelas

Our youth showed a high level of interest and participation, enriching their perspective on modern



industry operations.

### **“Education for Tomorrow” contest**

Looking toward the future of new generations, our coordinator, Mrs. Patricia Cárdenas, has launched — as she does every year — the call for our highly anticipated “Education for Tomorrow” contest. This competition invites high school students from various local schools to write an essay in English.

The central theme selected for this year’s edition is the element “Copper”. During April, we will be receiving the submissions, and subsequently, in May, we will carry out the careful selection and awarding of the most outstanding essays.

### **Monthly meetings: Strengthening our committee.**

The dynamism of our section is kept alive through our monthly meetings, led with great dedication by our President Rocio Hermosillo de Velasco and the Board of Directors. These gatherings are essential not only to keep us informed about the committee’s progress but also to continue strengthening the bonds of friendship and the extraordinary team we have built.

With great joy, we take this opportunity to extend the warmest welcome to a new member, Mrs. Carmen



**Section scholars and committee members gathering during a year-end community celebration at the home of Mrs. Beatriz Sánchez de Berumen and Mrs. Rocio Hermosillo de Velasco.**

Troncoso de Alvarado, who joins our committee. Every month, we value the companionship and affection that unites us. A beautiful example of this was our traditional Christmas Posada in December, where we celebrated together in the joyful and colorful atmosphere that makes the holiday season so special. ■

## **WAAIME Mexico DF; Strategic management and academic excellence**

by Ligia Berlanga – President of WAAIME Mexico

The continuous work of the Mexico DF Section focuses on strengthening the administrative foundations of our committee to guarantee a direct impact on the training of future earth sciences professionals. Over the last period, our activities have centered on institutional planning and the rigorous evaluation of new candidates for our scholarship program.

### **Strategic planning and inter-institutional coordination**

In November 2025, the committee held a strategic work session. The main objective of this meeting was to structure and define the key agenda items for the upcoming meeting with the Executive Committee. Likewise, coordination guidelines with representatives from the other WAAIME sections were established.

### **Financial management and administrative transparency**

During our working roundtables, our treasurer, Maria Ester de Herrera, presented an update on the organization’s tax obligations. The payment of the corresponding taxes generated by each donation to the scholarship fund was determined and informed to the committee. This rigorous administrative management



**Committee working session focused on financial oversight and the review of candidates for the 2026 scholarship program.**

ensures transparency and continuity of our educational support.

### **New opportunities: 2026 candidate selection**

The core of our institutional mission remains the



promotion of academic talent. In February, Lucy Baena de Morales, in her capacity as scholarship chair, formally presented a scholarship program proposal to the committee. After a thorough evaluation, it was proposed to award scholarships to three outstanding candidates.

The selected young individuals are high-achieving students currently pursuing degrees in Geological Engineering at the prestigious National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM):

- Patricio Wong Arévalo.
- Miguel Ángel Vilchis Rodríguez.
- Martin Tellez Reyna.

The integration of these three students into our scholarship program reaffirms the Mexico DF Section's commitment to the training of highly qualified specialists prepared to face the sector's challenges. ■



**Section leadership and members gathered for a strategic planning meeting to align priorities and coordinate upcoming initiatives.**

## WAAIME Chile;

# Consolidating mining's future expansion

by Katherine Pinochet – President

Over the last period, WAAIME Chile has continued to strengthen its commitment to the training of future mining professionals, driving key initiatives to project the program into the coming years.

### International Pride: The Copper Club Scholarship

In this cycle, we seek to highlight those who have stood out exceptionally, such as Estefanía Medina Guzmán, a former WAAIME Chile scholar and a mining civil engineering graduate from the University of Chile.

Estefanía was awarded The Lord Bagri Scholarship, the highest distinction granted by The Copper Club worldwide, and was appointed as a member of the organization's Board of Directors for the 2025–2026 term.

Regarding this milestone, Estefanía shared some touching words: "I come from a rural family where everything is achieved with great effort, and \$15,000 USD is an almost unattainable figure. Therefore, this scholarship represents an open door to opportunities my parents never had and an acknowledgement of all the sacrifices we faced as a family."

### Cycle Closing and New Generation

One of our most relevant milestones will be the closing event for the 2024-2025 scholarship generation, which will take place in April. This great gathering will be held at the prestigious Auditorium of the Chilean Institute of Mining Engineers, serving as an ideal space to recognize achievements, share experiences, and reinforce our sense of community.

In parallel, after starting the selection process



**International Pride: We celebrate WAAIME Chile scholar Estefanía Medina Guzmán, a mining civil engineering graduate from the University of Chile and recipient of The Copper Club's Lord Bagri Scholarship.**



in December and conducting exhaustive in-person interviews, the new 2026-2027 generation of scholars will be notified during the last week of March. These new talents will be invited to the April ceremony so that both generations can meet and strengthen our network.

### **Expansion and strategic alliances**

With the goal of expanding the program's reach and connecting with a larger number of outstanding students, we have integrated a new university into our call for applications: the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. According to the QS World University Ranking 2026, this institution is ranked as the best in the country.

### **Inspiring contributions and new platform**

We are deeply grateful to our former scholar Fabiola Villablanca Soto, who made a generous donation of \$2,000 USD for the 2026-2027 period. Her generosity aims to fund an additional student over the next two years.

Finally, to consolidate our institutional presence and streamline future application processes, WAAIME Chile



**A moment of connection as WAAIME Chile prepares to welcome the 2026–2027 scholarship cohort.**

is proud to announce the creation and launch of its new official website: [www.waaimechile.org](http://www.waaimechile.org). ■