

Cold-Calling, Creativity, and Cross-Disciplinary Skills: How Sam Wilkins Turned UConn Experience into a Full-Time Job

Sam Wilkins didn't wait for opportunity to knock, picked up the phone and made it happen. As a **Multidisciplinary Engineering major with a specialization in Industrial Design**, Sam carved a unique path that blended creativity, technical skill, and initiative.

While working at UConn's Krenicki Arts and Engineering Institute, Sam split her time between organizing the Materials Library in Fine Arts and conducting **independent research on sustainable materials in aviation**. "I explored a wide range of materials that could be used in future aviation practices," she said. "Part of that research meant cold-calling industrial designers, materials scientists, and engineers to get real-world feedback for my honors thesis."

Sam's **hands-on experience** extended beyond research. She contributed to the Krenicki Institute's innovation events like the Shelter Building Showdown, asked advice to designers to refine her portfolio, and participated in Senior Design, where she and her team tackled the challenge of eliminating overhead bins in air-

craft—bringing industrial design thinking into a mechanical engineering context.

Her breakthrough came through an internship at a major manufacturing company, where she applied her **Solid-Works certification** and design skills to real-world projects. "What helped me land the



internship was my research at the Center for Clean Energy Engineering and the SolidWorks models I built at UConn,” Sam explained. “Being multidisciplinary meant I could speak the language of mechanical, electrical, and design engineering.”



That internship culminated in a national engineering convention, where Sam and her teammate **won first place** for their summer-long projects. Her storytelling, design thinking, and technical fluency impressed the judges—and later, the hiring team. After presenting her printed portfolio and walking through her design process, Sam was offered a full-time position in mechanical engineering.

Sam’s story is a testament to the power of combining engineering with design, and the value of taking initiative. From portfolio nights and resume workshops to research and real-world collaboration, the Multidisciplinary Engineering – Industrial Design track gave her the tools to succeed.