



Mechanical Engineering  
Academy of Distinguished Alumni

## **Catherine (Cat) Tradd**

*Outstanding Young Mechanical Engineer, 2015*

BSME, The University of Texas at Austin, 2007

*Program Manager*  
Solar Turbines Incorporated  
A Caterpillar Company

Catherine “Cat” Tradd loves solving problems. Growing up on a cattle ranch in the Texas Hill Country, there were always many to solve. At 12-years-old, Cat discovered her passion for engineering when she attended a Careers in Engineering for Women event sponsored by The University of Texas at Austin’s Women in Engineering Program. This amazing outreach event made her realize that she could solve problems for a living, and that was awesome.

Cat graduated with a BS in mechanical engineering from UT in 2007. During her academic career, she had the privilege of supporting Dr. Carolyn Seepersad’s research initiatives in 3-D printing and additive manufacturing design. She was a leader in multiple student organizations and led a Freshman Interest Group. During the summers, she completed four internships in different fields of engineering: field service with Schlumberger, and tool design, manufacturing engineering, and R&D with Caterpillar, Inc. (CAT). These experiences enriched her academic work, and the minute her boots hit the manufacturing floor, she knew she was home.

Cat started full-time with CAT in a three-year leadership rotational program where she served as a manufacturing engineer for fluid contamination control & assembly best practices for heavy equipment; production supervisor for machining, fabrication, and assembly of mining products; and supply chain planning & supplier development engineer for tractor undercarriage products. This established her foundation of manufacturing, engineering, and leadership experience.

After completing the rotational program, Cat transferred to Solar Turbines, a wholly owned subsidiary of CAT where she supervised turbomachinery production teams in three different manufacturing environments on three different shifts. Production leadership is one

of the hardest and best jobs Cat ever had. She learned about herself as a leader, the incalculable value of people, the power of believing in the product, and the strength of engaged teams.

Subsequently, she returned to engineering as a turbomachinery package manufacturing engineer, where she supported project deliverables and interfaced with production. She loved revisiting her technical roots and developed a deep knowledge of turbomachinery packaging.

Cat earned her 6sigma Black Belt when she changed jobs again to move into a strategic role supporting engineering and part metadata as the business process lead responsible for part classification and attributing as a Windchill system administrator. She led a cross-functional enterprise taxonomy governance team, set part metadata strategy, and became a sought-after industry expert in database metadata management.

After 10 years of industrial experience, Cat is now a program manager for Solar Digital, a customer-facing business unit bringing world-class performance and reliability solutions based on connected products and real-time, data-driven, purpose-built performance applications.

Cat is a leader and volunteer for Solar’s Employee Resource Groups, the Society of Women Engineers, the AIDS Walk, and Relay for Life. She has been recognized as a 30 Under 30 award winner by the Society of Manufacturing Engineers, was inducted into the UT Department of Mechanical Engineering’s Academy of Distinguished Alumni, and has been recognized with Key Contributor Awards by both Caterpillar and Solar Turbines.

Cat’s favorite activities include problem solving, reading, and traveling with her amazing wife, Natalie, and their dogs.