

## **Sheila Whitman, Applied Mathematics GIDP**

This past week I had the opportunity to present my research and attend the Artificial Intelligence in Materials and Manufacturing Conference (AIM 2025) in Anaheim, CA. As an incoming 5<sup>th</sup> year PhD candidate in Applied Mathematics working at the intersection of machine learning and materials science, this conference provided the ideal interdisciplinary platform to network and engage with leading experts in the field. Presenting my research on learning microstructure–property relationships using pre-trained vision transformers allowed me to receive constructive feedback from a diverse audience, including materials scientists, computational modelers, and industry professionals. These discussions helped me refine aspects of my methodology and inspired new directions for my dissertation research. Following my presentation, I was offered a summer internship opportunity to extend my current research with large-scale computational resources at a national laboratory, which I unfortunately had to decline due to my upcoming graduation. Beyond the technical sessions, I attended the *Improve Your Networking Skills* workshop, where I gained practical strategies for initiating and sustaining professional conversations. I earned a certificate of participation, and the skills I developed there contributed directly to successful networking throughout the week. I connected with both potential employers and fellow graduate students, forming relationships that will support my career and collaborative research moving forward. One of the most impactful aspects of this conference was networking with fellow graduate students from all over the world who also work on similar interdisciplinary research. These conversations have inspired me to consider international postdoc and job opportunities in the future, something that has never really crossed my mind.