When she was studying civil engineering and economics at Northwestern, Lauren Keeley ('10) felt comfortable in the sprawling hallways and limestone walls of the Technological Institute. Now, as a member of the project management team at Walsh Construction, one of the nation’s top contractors, she’s building structures that dwarf Northwestern Engineering’s landmark building.

**How did you get your start at Walsh Construction? What is your role today?**

I interned with Walsh the summer before my senior year at Northwestern and started full-time after graduation. As an assistant project manager in heavy/civil construction, I work with other managers, project engineers, superintendents, field crews, and designers. Together, we build from the ground up to deliver a quality project to the client.

**You worked on the 2,100-foot long, cable-stayed Abraham Lincoln Bridge project to help connect Louisville, Kentucky with Jeffersonville, Indiana. What role did you play?**

My primary responsibility was to manage construction of the reinforced concrete structures on the main span, the towers. I was involved in final design development and eventually the day-to-day construction of the three, 240-foot tall structures on the bridge.

I was also involved in planning, geometry control, quantity tracking, cost management, scheduling, material procurement, and subcontractor management—primarily on the main span, but also on the approach structures.

The support from the people of Louisville and Jeffersonville for the bridge has been remarkable. Nearly 50,000 people participated in a “Walk the Bridge” event before it officially opened to traffic. The hope is the six-lane bridge will ease vehicle congestion and revitalize economic development between the two cities in the years to come.

**How has your background as a Northwestern engineer helped you in the construction industry?**

In construction, decisions need to be made quickly, and any problems that arise need to be solved even quicker. When I have concrete trucks waiting to discharge, an inspector challenging the job details, and a crew waiting on me for direction, I simply say, “We’ll make it work.” Fortunately, Northwestern taught me how to think and ask the right questions, a real benefit in a fast-paced environment. My whole-brain engineering education motivates me to challenge established best practices. At Walsh, I always look for more efficient and cost-effective ways to manage resources, or new approaches to improve collaboration with others—all to deliver a better end product.

**Now that the Abraham Lincoln Bridge is complete, what’s next for you?**

I’m transitioning to a new role within Walsh to work on the Central Terminal Building Replacement Project at LaGuardia Airport in New York City. The project is one of the largest public-private partnership contracts in the country. While I expect to find some similarities to my work on the Abraham Lincoln Bridge, I’m looking forward to expanding my career experience into airport construction and building on what I’ve learned.

**Alex Gerage**