Sheridan (Root) Foster  
Founder and CEO, Elemental Green

What is your favorite Madison/campus memory?  
Before I started at UW, I remember getting a huge laugh from when the pink flamingos were first put on Bascom Hill. My favorite place on campus was Library Mall because of the random craziness that was always going on there.

What has helped you achieve success in your career?  
My personal mantra is “Do the right thing”. I think it is the job of leaders to guide their teams to successfully determine the “right thing” in the context of their company and situation.

Outside of class, what experiences did you find most meaningful?  
My sorority, Kappa Alpha Theta, was an important part of my UW experience. They helped me become part of a community on such a large campus, and were great resources for support when things got tough.

What excites you about the future of Engineering?  
As someone with an ECE degree who went into hardware, I think it’s great that hardware is hip again. In my current work in green building, I am excited that technology is solving some of the tough issues around sustainability.

Besides engineering, do you have another passion you have pursued or would have liked to pursue given the time?  
I believe the arts are a vital part of the creative process. I am a better engineer for having taken art classes while at UW, and I continue to enjoy painting. My husband and I support the opera, we promote concerts for emerging vocal artists, and I also serve on the board of the iSing Silicon Valley Girlchoir.

Who was an influential peer/professor from your time at UW-Madison?  
Dr. Verner Suomi, who was part of the Space Science and Engineering Center. While I worked there as a student technician and programmer, he inspired me to be a cross-disciplinary problem solver and to use technology to help answer big questions.

What are you most proud of in life? What is your greatest achievement?  
I am most proud of my daughter and how she approaches life. She has a broad view of what she can and will accomplish. I hope that I can be a role model and mentor to her, and other girls, who want to pursue a career in STEAM.

What would be your advice to current students? What do you wish you had known?  
Don’t expect to know everything you need to know the day you graduate. Your unique path will take you in many different directions. In my case, I went from being a computer designer, to a Fortune 500 executive, and now to a sustainability advocate. Never lose your love of learning and finding new challenges.