THE FOCUS

Celebrating 45 Years of Community Excellence: A Celebration of Continuing Growth

UT welcomes back Minority Engineering Scholars Program (MESP)—Group 45
The Office of Engineering Diversity Programs (EDP) has seen a lot of change from Fred Brown’s time as its founding director. Originally operating as the Minority Engineering Scholarship Program, it was renamed in 1999 and contributes to opportunities for engineering students from a wide range of historically underrepresented populations: African American, Hispanic, Native American, Pacific Islander, and Alaskan Native students—and also female students.

Throughout the past 45 years, EDP has offered a home-base on campus for more than 1,000 students, and provided scholarships and success-oriented resources like the Fred Brown Jr. Minority Academic Endowment, James Pippin Pre-College Program Endowment, and the Engineering Diversity Excellence Endowment.

EDP continues to expand to support more students from underrepresented populations who are pursuing engineering. It is considered a safe place where students can learn, grow, receive encouragement, and even let out their frustrations from time to time.

EDP has also made strides in maintaining strong corporate relationships. Their partnership with the Tennessee Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (TLSAMP) provides students with many opportunities, including monthly enrollment on subjects involving professionalism and student development. The TLSAMP Graduate Development program also offers post-undergraduate workshops and GRE preparation for students planning to attend graduate school.

In 2017, the Engineering VOLunteers for Ninth Graders (eVOL9) pre-college summer program was selected for the National Association of Multicultural Engineering Programs Advocates Outreach Program award honoring programs that have actively increased the participation of students from historically underrepresented minority populations in engineering.

“EDP continues to grow in diversity numbers with the goal of recruiting, retaining, and preparing students for undergraduate and graduate school,” said Travis Griffin, director of the office.

“Our staff support has grown allowing the program to extend the reach to both multicultural and women in engineering,” says Griffin. “Due to the generous support of our alumni, we were able to expand the office to improve recruitment efforts and now offer a student support center for continuing students.”

Those efforts have paid off with a marked increase in women joining the college in the fall of 2018. Griffin’s goal is to provide programming to address recruitment, transition, and retention of female engineering students while continuing the strong support for multicultural engineering students and their communities. Efforts will include class clustering, academic workshops, and community building in order to improve academic performance and retention.

“As a member of Group 8 of the then-MESP program, I felt like I was joining a family. The leaders of the program, as well as the campus leadership, provided an opportunity that forever changed my life. I left prepared and ready for the world. The program continues to provide value for current and future students by providing a quality engineering foundation along with preparing the graduates to enter the diverse workforce.”

Rodney Brooks (BS/ME ’85)

“I get to help design spacecrafts for a living, which is quite possibly the greatest job of all time! Without the amazing professors, TLSAMP, and academic rigor of UT engineering, there is no way I would be where I am today. After serving as a student and graduate mentor for TLSAMP, I can honestly say that the positive effects of the program on your academic trajectory are immeasurable.”

Jamie A. Porter (BS/NE’08, MS/NE’09, PhD/NE’12)

“UT’s Diversity Program was an excellent resource for me. I started with the HITEES pre-college program and learned about industrial engineering. Then, as a freshman, I studied industrial engineering with those lifelong friends I made the summer before. Without NSBE and TLSAMP, I wouldn’t have had the leadership skills to successfully land my first co-op with Toyota, a company that I am currently employed with. The diversity program was very good to me and I hope to return the favor as an alumnus.”

Kalese Howse (BS/IE ’17)

“The UT Engineering Diversity Program provided tremendous benefits for me during my time on campus as an engineering student. Being a kid from Knoxville, I had the opportunity to participate in numerous diversity pre-college engineering programs. These experiences gave me a good insight into what life would be like as an engineering student. Participating in the TLSAMP program the summer before my first semester gave me the opportunity to form relationships with other diverse students who were pursuing engineering. The bonds that were formed during that program helped us support and encourage each other in our studies. I maintain those relationships formed as a young adult even now, as a working professional. I am forever indebted to James Pippin for introducing engineering foundation to me, and keeping me engaged and focused throughout my entire collegiate experience. From what I hear and see from afar, Travis seems to be doing a great job with the students these days!”

Nicholas D. Brabson, PE (BS/EE ’09)
Senior Engineer, Georgia Power, Atlanta, Georgia

Celebrating

Years of Diversity
In Engineering at UT

Join the college for 45 Years of Community Excellence: A Celebration of Continuing Growth

Written by Randall Brown

Friday, November 2, 2018
TCE Campus Highlight Tours: 2:15-3:30 p.m. from Room 307 SERF
Breakout Events
Meet the Dean and Updates on Diversity Programs: 4-5 p.m., in Room 622, Min H. Kao Building
UT Homecoming Parade: 4-5 p.m., at Circle Park

Saturday, November 3, 2018
TCE Homecoming Tailgate in the Perkins, Ferris, and SERF Courtyard
UT vs. Charlotte Football Game at Neyland Stadium
Follow the celebration with #EDP45 and watch videos of our diversity ambassadors at engr.utk.edu/diversity/edp45.
View the college’s diversity milestones at tiny.utk.edu/EDP45.

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Office of Engineering Diversity Programs
Women in Engineering: Samantha Zimmermann

Written by Randall Brown

Samantha Zimmermann came to campus from her hometown of tiny Hohenwald, Tennessee, while still in high school. She kick-started her engineering education via the 2016 High School Introduction to Engineering Systems (HITES12) pre-college summer program.

“I was sure I wanted to go into engineering, but I was not sure which department or major,” she said. The pre-college experience gave her an opportunity to check out everything first-hand.

“It really helped me narrow down my choices, as well as expose me to other things I had not considered,” said Zimmermann. “Getting to talk to graduate and undergraduate students in the lab, and to the professor, also helped me make a decision.”

She participated in a cybersecurity project with Garrett Rose, associate professor in electrical engineering and computer science, that inspired her focus as a computer engineering major—with a particular interest in artificial intelligence and machine learning.

“I would say HITES12 made my freshman year feel less intimidating, and made me feel like I belong at UT,” said Zimmermann. “Several other HITES12 participants have also come to UT, so there were definitely familiar faces in Engineering Fundamentals.”

The experience helped her forge past some outdated stereotypes. “Can girls even be engineers? If you become an engineer, you’ll be the only girl and nobody will listen to you,” said Zimmermann. “Much to my surprise, the HITES12 attendees were about 50/50 male and female. Plus, if I remember correctly, more than half of the counselors were female.”

Zimmermann described herself as a “shy kid at camp,” but her counselors encouraged her to step forward and let her voice be heard. She also took classes from female faculty members and listened to the success stories of fellow women engineering students who did internships at major companies.

“I never really understood the importance of representation until I got to college,” said Zimmermann. “If these other women can become something great doing what they are passionate about, so can I.”

When her freshman year got underway, Zimmermann again connected with Rose, who invited her to sit in on research meetings and study in his group’s lab.

“After just a few weeks on campus, I felt like I had a ‘spot,’ a place I was supposed to be,” she said. Zimmermann used this vantage point to give back to new students as an undergraduate mentor in the 2018 HITES12 program.

“I helped out the students by filling in the ‘knowledge gaps’ between high school knowledge and the graduate students’ research,” she said.

She also got to pass along the same encouragement she received in HITES12 to an aspiring young woman engineer. She was happy to encourage the camper to take the risk of asking questions and have confidence doing experiments and presenting her poster at the end of the week.

“I believe that since I was there, she did not feel completely ‘alone,’” said Zimmermann. “There was someone else ‘just like her’ there.”

In addition to her summer mentoring job, Zimmermann is also a member of Sisters: Women in ECECS, has mentored an undergraduate mentor in the Engineering Mentor Program, and is a teaching assistant for Engineering Fundamentals.

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Jasmine Worlds Earns Student Leadership Award

Jasmine R. Worlds, a spring 2018 graduate in mechanical engineering, was the 2017 recipient of the Student Leadership Award from the Career Communication Group. She accepted the award at the October 5th 2017 Women of Color STEM Conference in Detroit, Michigan.

The Student Leadership Award recognizes students who strive to make outstanding contributions to the varied aspects of science, technology, engineering, or math education and who have demonstrated an interest and commitment to volunteering and learning while impacting the academic atmosphere of their campus.

Worlds was nominated for her passion and commitment to academic and professional growth, and her willingness to lead and mentor future engineers of all ages.

The Intercollegiate Summer Bridge program is a three-week residential transition for STEM majors. This collaborative initiative is sponsored by the Tickle College of Engineering, the College of Arts & Sciences and the Herbert College of Agricultural Science and Natural Resources. Participants take a mathematics and chemistry class with lab seminar throughout the program and are pre-enrolled in similar sections to create a smooth transition for fall courses.

This year marks the largest cohort with 24 participants from the Tickle College of Engineering, nine from the College of Arts & Sciences, and eight from the Herbert College of Agricultural Science and Natural Resources. The vast majority of students came from various parts of Tennessee and two from the state of Georgia. All students have a declared major in STEM and/or the pre-professional tracks.

Just as in previous years, the cohort included a STEM site visit. This year’s visit was at the US Space and Rocket Museum in Huntsville, Alabama. In addition to the academic seminars and STEM site visit, students were also provided student life workshops, which covered a range of topics from professional dining etiquette to mock interviews and college workshops, and allowed students greater exposure to various departments.

Engineering students were introduced to the Innovation Collaboration Studio, where the program featured computer programming, 3D printing, laser cutting, and more. Students were also introduced to Engineering Fundamentals taught by Program Director Richard Bennett. Bennett welcomed the students to the program, discussed student success in engineering, and provided a first-week simulation of engage classes.

The closing awards luncheon included guest speaker, Mr. Julian Wright, and awards for best academic performance and improvement, as well as best overall performance. These awards included a small book stipend for the students to help with educational expenses. After completing the Summer Bridge program, all 24 engineering students moved into the Engineering Engage Living & Learning Community in Orange Hall. These students will continue their studies clustered in engineering, chemistry, and math courses.
Movers and Shakers

Completed an Internship
Ifeadayo Akinbudo (ME, So.) Procter & Gamble in Mehoolpany, Pennsylvania
Frenando Blevins (ISE, So.) Colgate-Palmoive in Cambridge, Ohio
Kassidy Boone (ME, Fr.) Medtronic in Memphis, Tennessee
Jeremy Bronner (CE, Jr.) TDOT in Memphis, Tennessee
Darian Clegg (ISE, Jr.) Procter & Gamble in Cincinnati, Ohio
Benjamin Cruz (BESS, So.) Oak Ridge in Knoxville, Tennessee
Terryl Dodson (CS, Fr.) Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Oak Ridge, Tennessee
Talecia Dyson (CE, So.) Tennessee Department of Transportation in Knoxville, Tennessee
Gabriel Gonzalez (ME, So.) Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee
Henry Iduoze (ME, So.) ExxonMobil in Houston, Texas
Kendra Jackson (CE, Jr.) Knoxville Utility Board in Knoxville, Tennessee
Rojae Johnson (CE, Jr.) Booz Allen in Huntsville, Alabama
Keona Madison (ME, So.) Rockwell Automation in Mieah Turner begins many days walking a job site with her team to assess the status of project, safety hazards, and ensure that subcontractors are in sync with the overall plan. The morning stroll keeps her eyes on the big picture in her position as senior project manager for Nashville-based Messer Construction.

Women in Engineering Spotlight: Mieah Turner
Written by Randall Brown

Mieah Turner begins many days walking a job site with her team to assess the status of project, safety hazards, and ensure that subcontractors are in sync with the overall plan. The morning stroll keeps her eyes on the big picture in her position as senior project manager for Nashville-based Messer Construction.

“Often times this walk can generate questions where we would need to review the design documents or consult the architect or engineer,” said Turner. “There is truly no average day in the construction field, which is perfect for those with engineering backgrounds who enjoy problem solving.”

Turner, a 2009 civil engineering graduate, made a habit of problem-solving and making connections early in her academic career. She began working as a co-op student with Messer as a sophomore and ultimately did four rotations, both in her hometown of Knoxville and in Cincinnati, before she graduated and joined the company full time.

“Engineering has a great program for connecting students with employers,” she said. “I was able to interview with six employers and selected Messer.”

Turner also became active with the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) while at UT, and continues that association as a professional.

“While at UT, I served as co-programs chair and chapter president,” she said. “My involvement helped me with professional development skills needed to improve my career.”

The college’s support of NSBE and the eagerness of her professors to answer questions, even outside of the classroom, helped Turner succeed academically.

“Positive interaction with individuals from various backgrounds is very important for my professional and personal growth,” she said. Turner was one of two African American women in her civil engineering graduating class. She took the opportunity to bridge cultural gaps and learned that she and her fellow students had more in common than they had differences.

“I use this lesson today, as I am often in the same environment in construction,” said Turner. “I have fostered great working relationships and friendships from subcontractors and coworkers. I hope these relationships help pave the way for future minorities and women in the construction field.”

Her success earned her recognition in 2017 from Building Design & Construction Magazine, which named her to its “40 Under 40” list of young stars in the architectural, engineering, and construction professions. This spotlight helps Turner convey a message to young women seeking to follow an engineering career like hers: the goal is very much attainable.

“The lack of women in the field should not discourage them,” she said. “When first starting at Messer in the Nashville region, I was the only woman in operations. Since that time, we have had four other women join us.”

She attributes this increase to the emphasis that schools and organizations like NSBE give to STEM awareness among young women and other minority groups. She helps and maintains this message via the NSBE Nashville Professionals group, with which she previously served as chapter president, and with organizations like the Nashville Metropolitan Alumni Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, with which she serves as corresponding secretary.

Turner also remains close to tried and true engineering Volt relationships.

“I have a close friendship with a group of classmates who also graduated from UT with various engineering disciplines,” she said. “We enjoy traveling the world together as often as we can get away from work.”

Around the world and across the jobsite, Turner’s Volunteer spirit builds community and lights a path of opportunity for all engineers.
VISIONARY PRODUCTS

A leading global auto supplier to automakers and the aftermarket and heavy-duty industries, DENSO delivers advanced technology, systems and components. We focus on our customers’ needs to provide pioneering solutions.

One of DENSO’s largest operations is in Maryville, Tenn., in the foothills of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. DENSO Manufacturing Tennessee, Inc. produces electronic components, instrument clusters, alternators, and starters (among them DENSO’s new technology—the stop/start starter).

Key customers include Toyota, Honda, the Detroit 3, and Harley-Davidson.

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- Mechanical
- Industrial

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Alumni Feature
Multicultural Spotlight: Sierra Ellis

Sierra Ellis earned her bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering in 2017 and headed straight to work with General Motors in Michigan. It wasn’t new territory for her, though. She knew the lay of the land thanks to multiple internship assignments during her time at UT.

“Honestly, I still can’t believe that I am here,” said Ellis, several months into the job. “I guess it’s still surreal to me.”

Her role in the company’s TRACK rotational program keeps her on the move as she shifts positions every four months. She worked as a certification engineer in her first rotation, working with other engineers and specialists to ensure testing went smoothly for the certification of vehicles. Her second and current rotation is in bridge and rail systems, a project management role ensuring that the systems make it to the proper plants around the country.

“We are the bridge—no pun intended—between the supplier and the plant,” said Ellis.

Her diversity of duties echoes the numerous programs Ellis participated in while at UT. She took part in Intercollegiate Summer Bridge (ISB), TLSAMP, pre-college counseling, peer mentoring, tutoring, and was active with the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE).

“If it weren’t for programs like ISB, NSBE, and TLSAMP, I can truthfully say, I wouldn’t be the person I am today—or in the position I am in today,” said Ellis. ISB gave her a personal introduction to the UT campus and her new peers.

“I made friendships during that time that have lasted,” she said. “The workload we were given, the dorms we slept in, and the buildings we had classes in gave me a college experience before classes even began. Walking around campus my first day just seemed more second nature to me since I experienced it during ISB.”

She contributed to this community vibe in turn through pre-college counseling and mentoring.

“My love for mentoring ran so deeply, I was given the name ‘Mama Sierra’ when I was a counselor in 2015,” said Ellis. She enjoyed hearing the success stories from pre-college students who then came to UT, and many younger students she mentored.

“The students I interacted with as a counselor, mentor, and tutor unknowingly helped me be a better engineer and person just as much I helped them grow,” said Ellis.

Her further encouragements to current and future students are to find their own best pace for studying, get involved with student groups and internships, and chase away the voice of self-doubt.

“Don’t listen to that voice,” she said. “You are just as capable—and sometimes even more capable—as anyone else. You didn’t make it this far by luck.”

Ellis made it from her Memphis hometown to her current career in Michigan using the very advice she gives. After hitting the ground running on GM’s rotational program, she is getting to know her new home and surroundings.

“I just started taking up origami and I want to start exploring Michigan and go to the different museums and attractions,” said Ellis. “Also, I plan to take a trip to Canada, since it’s close.”

She looks forward to finding a way to mentor through an organization like Big Brothers Big Sisters, maintaining her strong Volunteer spirit.
Hello! My name is Kendra Jackson and I am a senior civil engineering major from Cincinnati, Ohio and President of NSBE for the 2018–2019 school year. The UT NSBE chapter was founded in 1980 by Fred Brown Jr. The first president was Lois Wilson. My goals this school year are to expand our organization presence on campus, grow our chapter professionally, so our members are able to secure internships, co-ops, and graduation ready for the job force, and lastly increase our involvement in the Knoxville community and hopefully start a NSBE Jr. Chapter.

We regularly visit the Boys and Girls club, volunteer at Engineers Day, and hold our annual Mini-Spee event in the spring. Mini-Spee is a one-day event based on the National SEEK program. Local elementary-aged students come to UT on a Saturday and do activities within the various disciplines of engineering. This year will be our ninth and we look forward to it. We also plan to send students to participate in our Fall Regional Conference and the National Convention in the spring, so that they can interact with other collegiate engineers, collaborate with professionals and make connections for the future. I am proud of what we have been able to accomplish so far and excited for the future of the chapter.

NSBE is an international organization with the mission “To increase the number of culturally responsible black engineers who excel academically, succeed professionally, and positively impact the community.” NSBE is comprised of five regions. The University of Tennessee is a part of Region III, the powerhouse region.

Hello! My name is Laura Ferrer and I am a senior majoring in civil engineering. I was born in Barranquilla, Colombia, and grew up in Martin, TN. I have been part of SHPE for over four years and will serve as the chapter president for the 2018-2019 school year. Because of SHPE, I continue to grow as a student, young professional, and leader. Completed a co-op program, two undergraduate research programs, and quite recently studied abroad in China.

Members have the opportunity to meet recruiters, travel to conferences, and develop professionally. Students can also attend Study with SHPE events. If they are seeking a collaborative study environment, SHPE holds events throughout the year in collaboration with surrounding schools and the Tickle College of Engineering to reach students interested in engineering and provide them with more information about the engineering fields.

Finally, SHPE is able to provide all of these opportunities while celebrating our bonds as a SHPE “familia”. We have social events during the year, such as board game nights, cookouts, and salsa socials. Our ultimate goal as a chapter is to help develop any student interested in Engineering/STEM by providing them with the resources necessary to do so.

SHPE changes lives by empowering the Hispanic community to realize its fullest potential and to impact the world through STEM awareness, access, support and development. Their vision is a world where Hispanics are highly valued and influential as the leading innovators, scientists, mathematicians and engineers. SHPE-UTK provides students of all backgrounds with support through our four pillars: academics, professionalism, community outreach, and social events.

Hello everyone! My name is Kalie Knecht and I am honored to be serving as the president of UT SWE this year. I am a senior in nuclear engineering and in my time at UT, I have cooperated at Dominion Energy, conducted undergraduate research in the Materials Science and Nuclear Engineering departments, and completed an internship at Argonne National Laboratory. All these wonderful experiences would not have been possible to me without the fantastic opportunities for growth that SWE has given me.

Our SWE section has a variety of events that help our members learn and grow. We host several professional development events that allow our members to practice their soft skills with professionals. We also strive to introduce more young women into science and engineering, so we hold an annual large-scale outreach event called Tomorrow’s Engineers Today, where we invite local pre-college students to conduct experiments and see cool lab spaces.

One of the largest benefits of joining SWE is the community and support you will be given. We hold social events at least once a month to encourage our members to make new friends in our section and hang out with their old ones. We also welcome freshman members into our section by pairing them with an upperclassman mentor who will guide them through their freshman year, including helping them make their first college resume, practicing interview skills, and being their friend. For those that want to step up their involvement, we have a variety of committees throughout the year, as well as chair positions that help our officer team. Serving in these roles or as an officer is a great way to learn leadership.

UT’s SWE chapter was awarded “SWE Mission Award Gold” as well as “Best Practice in Mentoring Award” for the collegiate level. These awards recognize our group for embodying SWE core values and demonstrating continuous improvement and growth as we work to achieve the Society’s strategic goals. If you want to get involved in our section, please come to any of our events for a warm welcome. You can find our calendar on our website at utk.swe.org.

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EDP Calendar

November
2: 45th Anniversary of EDP
3: TCE Homecoming Tailgate
7—10: SHPE National Convention
16—17: NSBE Regional Conference

December
4: MESP End of Fall Event
14: Commencement

January
9: Classes Begin
7: MESP Spring Retreat
12: NSBE/SHPE/SWE Leadership Retreat

February
8—9: Black Engineer of the Year Conference
14—15: TLSAMP Research Conference

March
1: Breakfast of Champions
18—22: Spring Break
25: COP Awards Banquet
27—30: NSBE National Convention

April
6: COP Student Leadership Retreat
13: WomEngineers Conference
26: MESP End of Spring Event

May
9: Commencement

June
15—19: ASEE Conference

July
7—12: HITES12 Summer Program
15—19: eVOL10 Summer Program
19: Intercollegiate Summer Bridge Starts

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