Director’s Corner

Welcome to the IDEAs Program Newsletter — The Big Idea, Issue 7.

I have to admit that it is quite challenging to include all news about the IDEAs students in this issue, since there is so much happening during the 2011-2012 academic year, from freshman transition to senior achievement, from academic success to community engagement, from daily study life to friendship outside classroom and from alumni involvement to program sponsorship. Therefore, we would like to present the program and the UA experience from the perspectives of our freshmen. Hope you enjoy reading their comments and suggestions.

Quick program update:

- In the fall semester of 2011, 198 students participated in the IDEAs program, comparing to 57 students in 1990, 102 students in 2009 and 166 students in 2010.
- During the 2011-2012 academic year, 56 students have been awarded with $68,250 Minority Engineering Scholarships.
- More opportunities have been offered to the students who are interested in community services. Besides becoming hosts at recruiting/outreach events and speakers at workshop series, our students started mentoring kids in the Younger Engineering Program at the Cascade Village.

Scholarship Bulletin — Anton Scholarship

In the summer of 2011, Mr. Art Anton and Mrs. Carol Anton established the Art and Carol Anton Scholarship Fund for the purpose of attracting highly-qualified students from ethnically underrepresented groups to The University of Akron to study engineering. A student awarded with an Anton Scholarship might be provided up to $6,000 during their first-year at UA. The students who are awarded an Anton Scholarship will also be eligible for an Minority Engineering Scholarship in their second semester, as well as a tutoring/mentoring assistantship with the IDEAs program beginning in their sophomore year.

Ana Bacco (Corrosion Engineering), one of last year’s scholarship recipients, is a real role model for engineering student — she maintained a 4.0 GPA during her freshman year, became an undergraduate researcher under Dr. Castaneda-Lopez’s supervision in Corrosion Engineering, was elected as the Vice-President of SHPE and mentored kids from local communities. We are proud of Ana!

Another eight outstanding freshmen have been awarded and accepted this scholarship for the 2012-2013 academic year. They are Chantella Dent (Engineering), AlRitia Gore (Biomedical Engineering), Christopher Lewis (Electrical Engineering), Raymond Roos (Aerospace System Engineering), Art Sherman (Aerospace System Engineering), Leanna Sherman (Mechanical Engineering), Daniel Trepke (Engineering) and Joseph Vazquez (Engineering). “The financial aid package from UA is so attractive!” says AlRitia, “I am proud of being the first person applied for the Anton Scholarship this year and very excited about my college life as an biomedical engineering student.” With such wonderful financial support, we are confident that all of these students will also achieve their success in engineering.
Ana Bacco  (Corrosion Engineering): My first-year experience at UA showed the benefits of working hard and staying focused on studies. I believe my satisfaction and academic success is rooted on the strength and reinforcement from different programs and organizations. Scholarships provided by Choose Ohio First STEM Program and the IDEAs Program mean a lot to me and my family. The IDEAs Program also introduced me to community services and the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) — I am proud to say that I will be the Vice President for SHPE in the 2012-2013 academic year. SHPE has brought forth to me the importance of minorities sticking together, helping each other out and giving back to the community in which we live in. Another exciting thing was an opportunity to do undergraduate research in the Corrosion Engineering Program under the supervision of Dr. Castaneda-Lopez in summer of 2012. My first year at UA has been great because of professors, scholarship opportunities, tutors, friends, etc.. I think it is very important to surround yourself with people who have the same goals and want to succeed with a sense of determination. I would suggest new coming students that it is not wrong or bad to ask for help from professors, tutors or friends when needed. You must strive to achieve and learn as much as you can and when given opportunities do not pass them up!

Chibouks Anozie  (Civil Engineering): I chose UA not only because three of my siblings already graduated here, but also because of the profound engineering programs. My first year was good and it became better after I participated in the IDEAs Program, which kept me staying focus and maintaining a high academic standard. I had fun learning in Minority Engineering Seminar, in which we did service-learning projects for the United Disability Services of Akron. I also enjoyed “Project A Competition” that invited all freshmen to submit their A’s in quizzes, exams and term papers. All participants (project agents) were invited to the celebration luncheon and whoever turned in the most As got rewards. I highly recommend all minority engineering students to participate in activities that the IDEAs Program offers — learning is fun here!

Ian Bank  (Electrical Engineering): UA is an amazing and beautiful campus. From the research centers to the REC, there is not one part of the university that I do not like. I am a native here in Akron but going to UA does not make it seem that way. The students here are great and the staff is really just as awesome. There is so much to do here at Akron. My greatest memories would be welcome week and summer fest. The university is great at making sure the students get their education and have fun while doing it. I think that it is safe to say that the university really cares about their students. I must say that I am very proud to be a zip. My goal was to be successful and the best student I could be while earning my degree. I do believe that I am achieving my goal, but I do not think I would be able to do it all alone — my success is rooted in assistance and help that I got from the African-American Male Learning Community (AAMLC) at Office of Multicultural Development (OMD), Choose Ohio First STEM Program and the IDEAs Program. With the help from the three programs, I reached my potential as a student. I could not have imagined my first year experience any other way. Even if you are an outstanding student, you must realize that you cannot do it alone. You will learn to love UA resources, like the three programs I mentioned, just as I did.

Tanner DeJesu:  (Biomedical Engineering): My experience at UA was absolutely amazing and what made it so amazing was all of the support that the various units provided, including tutors, a place to study, counseling and events that allowed me to meet some of the older students. My recommendation to new students is to know your strengths and weaknesses and to learn to prioritize accordingly. Thus, you will be able to enjoy wonderful UA experience and make new friends.
Travel Wright (Computer Engineering): My experience at UA has been nothing short of incredible. Starting at orientation, I became connected with students and faculty from the OMD and joined the AAMLC. With that, I also found the IDEAs Program. Both programs helped me greatly in my success here. First, they both connected me with resources and friendships that I intend to last forever. Starting the year, my expectations were a 3.2 GPA due to my high school background. However, by studying with friends and creating a more competitive environment, my expectations heightened. I began striving to reach a 4.0, and with the help of the two programs, I exceeded my expectations. New students should take advantage of UA resources and keep in mind that hard work pays off!

Abel Pietros (Biomedical Engineering): Walking into college for the first time might be something of a fear slash awestruck moment for me. I saw my first year as being detrimental to my future education. Being a part of the IDEAs Program has pushed me into developing great study habits with others and forming friendships. This has lead on to give me better grades and allow me to become a part of groups, such Project A. I personally have to give a lot of credit to the people who were around me for my first year at UA. My advice to new coming students is to make friends with individuals who make you want to be the best in what you want to be!

Daniel Gerber (Biomedical Engineering): There is no certain word that describes my first year experience at UA. Although, I DO know that it allowed me to go further through my career in engineering. I am proud to say working with several students in the IDEAs Program helped me not only academically but socially as well. I have developed few but very strong relationships with classmates that are always there to help along the way. My mentor from the STEM Program has helped me discover who I really was as a person — knowing another student caring about you creates a better experience at UA. I would recommend future students that no matter what career path you choose, you will sooner or later find out what you are really meant to do through hard working and friendship.

Martin Whaley (Mechanical Engineering): My first semester was not that smooth — I thought my grade in mathematic did not show how much potential I had, but it did show how much effort I put into studies. During my second semester, I applied study methods learned from freshman classes and took advice from my advisors/upper-level classmates and I succeeded! I was awarded with Minority Engineering Scholarship — I enjoyed the feeling of achieving my goal. I would suggest all coming students to take advantage of resources like what the IDEAs Program offers. You will need encouragement, advice and support during your studies, especially in the fields of engineering.

Huy Ngo (Chemical Engineering): My parents pushed me to stay in Ohio for college. After visiting many campuses across the state, I fell in love with UA. People told me that college classes were extremely competitive and basically made you suffer — that is so not true. On my first day of classes, I was invigorated with a sense of belonging and drive for academia. I felt great to be amongst peers who had high aspirations like myself in the College of Engineering, and we encourage each other to reach our full-potential. One thing I learned is that in life you get out when you put in. Classes in Chemical Engineering are really manageable, yet you have to be willing to put in the work!

Shafia Ahmad (Mechanical Engineering): The best decision I could have made during my first year at UA was joining the F1 team. It helped me not only making new friends, but also learning more than what was taught inside the classroom. Because of this experience, I was able to obtain a coop position as a product engineer at Quality Synthetic Rubber. I really want to tell all students: “stay focus and absolutely join in a student design team!”
Say YES to Undergraduate Research

Pierre Hall (junior, Electrical Engineering): First, I want to say that undergraduate research is a great opportunity to better understand the theoretical coursework in engineering. It helped me correlate what I learned in classroom and put it to use in real life. Such hands-on experience is so valuable! Whenever I had interviews, I was always asked about what I did for my research. I feel my research experience definitely put me ahead of others who are applying for the same position.

My research topic was Battery Management of Electric Vehicles, under the supervision of Dr. Tom Hartley — it was one of the best experiences in my life! I greatly recommend engineering students to do undergraduate research even if it is for one summer only. Here come my suggestions:

1) Make sure to chose a topic that you feel passionate about and get ready for long hours retrieving data;
2) Choose a research advisor who has a focus in the filed that you want to pursue and whose teaching style matches your learning style;
3) Start your research in the summer time since you may have too many classes in the fall/spring semesters;
4) Apply for research scholarships or internships, which are available from various resources.

Calia Battista (sophomore, Biomedical Engineering): Your advisor talks about it, your professors foster it and your classmates are involved in it. Chances are, you’ve heard about undergraduate research. Here are six reasons you should begin research in the near future:

1) It helps you find what you like to do. Do not begin undergraduate research when you are positive you want to go to graduate school; by then it might be too late to have valuable experience. Instead, do research to see if it is right for you. If you love it, your choice is easy then.
2) Do it for obvious reasons: to go to graduate school. Many decent scholarships are available for students who have extensive research and publications. The earlier you begin the more experience you will have. You will also learn how to write novel publications on your research and hone your communication skills.
3) A benefit that is often overlooked is that research applies what you are learning in class. When you begin to apply what you have learned from your Mechanics of Solids, for example, to the stress and strains on bone cells, interestingly enough, it becomes fascinating and you learn more.
4) You could be a part of a ground-breaking discovery!
5) You may get paid for doing research by professors, scholarships or internships. There is a nice little income while gaining relevant work experience!
6) It will help you connect with your professors and students that you work with, and you will even connect with people around the globe at the conferences.

Please say Yes to undergraduate research!