Leah McPherson

Chemical Engineering

Hometown: Jackson Township, OH

Student organizations:

- Tau Beta Pi
- Omicron Delta Kappa
- UA Ballroom Dance Club
- Society of Women Engineers

Career after graduation: Material Engineer at Hankook Tire

Why did you choose your major?

I chose chemical engineering as my major after my junior year of high school. I took AP Chemistry as a junior and loved the subject. I liked math and physics well enough, so I decided chemical engineering would be a good major to pursue. It's worked out pretty well so far. I chose to come to the University of Akron because I knew several people that had come to UA for engineering and they all spoke very highly of the college.

I admit that when I began the engineering program at UA, I didn't really understand what it was a chemical engineer did. I didn't know that engineers almost always work as part of a group. I didn't know that chemical engineers designed chemical plants or determined the kind of equipment needed by a plant. I assumed chemical engineering was chemistry, just on a slightly larger scale. Chemistry is only a small part of chemical engineering – the other parts are knowing how fluid flows through a pipe, how heat transfers through a steel wall, and many other physics-based problems.

What is the most valuable things you learned from UA experiences?

The most valuable thing I've learned at UA is that it is very hard to be successful by yourself. My major would have been much more difficult if I didn't have people to study with, tutors to go over problems with, groups to do projects with. Engineers do not work by themselves. Learning how to work effectively in a group and learning how to ask for help when needed are incredibly valuable skills.

Engineering isn't an easy major. All of the engineering disciplines are challenging, but that should be exciting, not scary. There are many resources available at UA to help students succeed. The College of Engineering and the university libraries have tutoring programs, professors have office hours, and students form study groups. It'll be a lot of work, but you'll make the best friends of your life along the way. You can join design teams (build a robot for a NASA competition!) and there's a student organization for every interest. The world is yours! Go explore!