

The Lobby

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A newsletter for the students, faculty, and staff of the Mechanical Engineering Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

Engineers and Careers

By Tom Pocrnich

Former Industrial Relations Chair

As we graduate and look to apply what we have learned in the “Real World”, it can all seem a bit intimidating. Once the last exam is submitted, we try to devise a solution for the question that is, the next step. It’s at this point that it often feels like we have more unknowns than equations. This year in ASME’s industrial relations saddle, we attempted to gear our interaction with companies and Industrial Reps toward helping our members feel prepared. As the name implies, this officer position is set as the point of interface between our Org and industry; an industry that all our members will one day graduate into. Our goal this year was to help our members be better prepared; to let them eliminate a couple extra terms, or to call a variable negligible.

The ASME student chapter at UW-Madison has always had a strong tie to industry. Each year we send graduating seniors to work, often for firms which ASME has a relationship with. We continued that trend at our general meetings this fall. With speakers from: Lyon-dellBassell, Ford, Oshkosh Truck, Bjorksten, and Ingersoll Rand. Our general members were exposed to multiple disciplines where ME’s can work. We also held out-of-meeting

info sessions with Bechtel and GE Healthcare, further illuminating the wide range of companies who hire Mechanical Engineers.

With all of these corporate PowerPoint’s and logo-ed polo’s bombarding us, it’s easy to get caught up in the “sales pitch” mentality. Jobs and careers become products pitched by recruiters, rather than livelihoods. With our advanced skills in American commercialism, we feel pressured to choose one that appears most glamorous, most recognizable. New college grads are a commodity, and companies are interested in getting the best ones. It’s actually someone’s job to get the best grads in the door, they call that HR.

This year in Industrial Relations, we took steps toward trying to give the ASME another perspective. We asked each speaker to say a thing or two about their daily work and what they like about their job. We asked about what kind of projects they are involved in, and to elaborate on technical considerations specifically. After all, we are engineering students. We don’t do it because it’s easy; we do it because we like it; the Technical side that is. I don’t mean to generalize, but solely by virtue of you reading this, you’re probably pretty good at math and science.

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Engineers and Careers (continued)

(from page 1) So why not treat the audience at our meetings and our general member as such? That's what we proposed to companies this year. The actual work itself is substantially more important to understand, than who has the best giveaway at the career fair. The cereal you got from General Mills, and Febreze from Procter and Gamble are the negligible variables in the next step equation I referred to earlier.

Ryan Rowe from Oshkosh talked about how his office is a cubicle saying, "you will live in a cube too, so get used to it." He even went as far as to take a picture of his desk. This helped our members get a feel for how a real engineer works.

Mark Polster from Ford was a very involved ASME member in his time here at UW. He included pictures from his ASME days in a house on Breese St. and spoke highly of the merits of being a member. He also took us through his job selection process after graduation. He led us step by step to his solution of the next step equation. His hindsight observations were valuable pieces of information that our members may now incorporate into their own solutions. I think these examples summarize what we tried to accomplish with IR this year. Other happenings helped serve a similar purpose.

Other new updates this

fall were the reinstatement of the ASME Golf Outing and the activation of ASME Madison on Twitter. If you haven't followed us yet, I don't know what you're waiting for. The golf outing gave our members the opportunity to get together and talk amongst themselves, and with ASME Alums. A golf course is the perfect place to muse about new ideas, or ask alums about their work. It is our hope that this event and others like it will grow to involve local industry reps in the future. All in all, ASME and industry had another great semester. In the future, I hope we can carry on the spirit of preparing our engineers for the real world, and now we can Tweet about it too!

ASME Website Design Committee

*By Greg Hanson
Webmaster*

The UW-Madison chapter of ASME will be putting together its first-ever website design committee this semester. The goal of this committee is to broaden the technical skills of ASME's mechanical engineers by being able to add web development to their resumes. With that goal in mind, the webmaster for ASME will be offering once a week, hour long meetings with the intention of going over the basics of HTML and how these documents get interpreted into the information that is seen on a webpage. This will include the observation of complete websites and the editing and creation of HTML documents in an editor. At these meet-

ings, topics will be discussed via examples and tutorials which can be followed along from students' very own laptops or observed by an overhead projector. These meetings are very laid back, and the purpose is to give ASME members a basic understanding of websites and their source HTML code while at the same time mingling with fellow ASME members. Depending on interest from committee members, and members are welcome to join at any time throughout the semester, next semester it will be put to a vote as to whether the committee will pursue the redesign of the ASME website. It has been at least 4 years since any significant changes have been made to the website, and while our chapter's website is something to be proud of, the opportunity to

redesign the site would be a unique chance for members and a very nice element to add to the resume.



Spotlight on Your Professors

By *Adriana Scheiner*
Vice Chair



How many of you have taken a few minutes to ask your professors what they do outside of the “office”? My guess is that the majority of students who walk into their professors office hours simply run in, ask their homework question, and get out. I took a few minutes to ask three of our professors questions about their families and life outside of school and realized quickly that each professor has had experiences they are excited to share. Remember, professors are people too (Surprise!) and their knowledge greatly extends from what they teach 2 or 3 days a week. So next time you are wondering what restaurant to go out to on a Friday night, what fun day time activities Madison has to offer, or what to do with your life after college ends remember to take the time to stop in and see your professors, I am positive that conversation will be much more interesting than doing your homework.

Professor Nellis

Primary area of interest: Solar Energy lab on energy systems, primarily refrigeration systems

1. What would you do if you weren't a professor?

“I worked as a plant engineer at an injection molding facility before I went to graduate school. I'd probably still be doing that.”

2. What is your favorite part about living in Madison?

“Not the winter, the lakes are nice, and Mallard games!”



3. How about your free time?

“Coach my kid's baseball games, and take walks with my wife.”

4. Favorite Babcock Ice Cream?

“I'm lactose intolerate! My kids like chocolate.”

5. What else would you like to share with the students?

“My wife is probably the most interesting thing about me!”

Professor Pfefferkorn

Primary area of interest: I study manufacturing processes: where the tool meets the work piece. My lab is currently studying friction stir welding, mirco end milling, and laser mirco polishing.

1. If you weren't a professor?

“Manufacturing/Heat Transfer Engineer in Industry or a High School Teacher”

2. Favorite part about Madison?

“The people: intellectual, cultured, hard working, and fun-loving.”

3. How about your free time?

“Work on the 100-year-old house that I just bought, sea kayaking, reading, and photography”

4. Favorite Babcock Ice Cream?

“I prefer Sorbet, but I have enjoyed Blue Moon.”

5. Anything else to share?

“I am fluent in German.”



Professor Zinn

Primary area of interest: Medical Robotics Research

1. If you weren't a professor?

“I would work for a small medical robotics start-up that was in its beginning stages.”

2. Favorite part about Madison?

“The city is good for families, there are fun things with the kids available, restaurants, outdoors activities, and is full of progressive people of all ages who want to stay in the area”

3. How about your free time?

“I like to do things outdoors like canoeing and be with my family.” (two kids under six!)

4. Pets?

“1 Beta fish named ‘bluefer’ my kids named him, he's blue.”

5. Favorite Babcock Ice Cream?

“Vanilla, good quality classic vanilla”

6. Anything else to share?

“I worked for 15 years before teaching. Also, my favorite cocktail is a martini! I acquired a taste for them while living in San Francisco.”

UW Homecoming 2010!

By Michael Szewczyk
Former Polygon Rep

Every fall semester, a committee of students funded by the UW Alumni Association organizes multiple fun events for every day of Homecoming week. Following tradition, ASME and SWE teamed up to participate and compete in the Homecoming activities. This year's Homecoming Week kicked off on October 1st in Library mall with student performances, free food and barge races. The barge race is an event where students build boats out of cardboard, plastic bags and duct tape. The boats are manned with as many students as possible and are raced in the Lake by the Memorial Union Terrace from one pier to the next. We used the combined engineering talent and artistic ability of ASME and SWE to create an incredibly seaworthy, yet eye-catching pirate-themed boat. With the power of 3 ladies and one gentleman, we beat all the other student orgs in our division.

After the kickoff, there were events every day leading up to the intense rivalry of the Wisconsin-Minnesota football game. On Sunday, members participated in the Literacy Network Run/Walk & Kids' Fun Run with Bucky. Each participant had the choice between a 5K and a 10K run or walk. Five kilometers sounds short until you actually start running. At the end, free profes-

sional massages, brats, ice cream, and other food were provided for the participants.

To finish up a great week, each student org built a float for the parade down State Street. ASME and SWE worked late into the night to create an impressive pirate boat that lit up at night and had water flowing down the main mast. Every member of ASME and SWE were pirates or maidens. The parade started on Gilman and went down multiple blocks of State Street. There was a strong turnout with many young children in the crowd to whom we threw pieces of delicious candy. The night finished with a firework display and awards were given out. The following day, the Wisconsin football team defeated Minnesota 41-23.



Above: Michael Szewczyk and SWE girls paddle to victory. Right: ASME and SWE dress for the pirate-themed float

ASME Fall Banquet

By Eric Lembach
Banquet Chair

On October 11th, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers hosted their annual Fall Banquet. We chose this time in the semester to honor our new members who are committed and dedicated to making a difference on campus. They heard from a distinguished ME professor and a ASME officer, were presented with certificates of membership, and were able to meet fellow new members and current officers in attendance.

The fall banquet is one of the few events throughout the year that is solely dedicated to the newcomers of the organization. At this stage of the semester, it was vitally important to give them an idea of what they can expect from being a member of ASME and get a better understanding of what it means to be an engineering student at UW-Madison.

We were lucky enough to have Professor John Pfothenauer speak with us about the mechanical engineering field, and give us insight on

some of his experiences throughout his career. He highlighted the importance of some aspects of engineering



that do not get mentioned as much as they probably should. Being an engineer obviously consists of being knowledgeable in the fields of math and science, but there also

needs to be a natural curiosity about the work you do. This applies to students asking questions in the classroom, and employees being passionate about their work in the various engineering disciplines. Without this component, you lose the satisfaction that you are making a difference in the world and utilizing your talents to better yourself. Professor Pfothenauer showed us an example of his enthusiasm for cryogenics by developing an interactive learning game with DoIT called "Cool It". This game teaches principles of engineering and cryogenics with a real world business sense. Professor Pfothenauer also helped us understand the significance of being able to effectively communicate with others. In the modern workplace, engineers are now expected to be able to deliver their research and analysis not only to other engineers, but to employees in other departments as well. Although this can initially be seen as a challenge to communicate to differing audiences, Professor Pfothenauer emphasized that through practice it eventually becomes natural. Because of this, I find it extremely valuable that the engineering curriculums require at least two English classes. Recruiters can see right away the communication abilities a prospective employee has, and I think Professor Pfothenauer wanted us to recognize how essential it is to be a well rounded person before looking for a job in the real world.

We also had the chance at the end of the banquet to hear from Mark Trader, an experienced ASME chair. He spoke about how valuable being an active ASME member can

be. The countless opportunities that are available for all ASME members can help develop the exact same skills

Professor Pfothenauer had spoken about earlier. From personal experience, ASME has given me an edge in searching for jobs at companies ranging in all sizes. Recruiters always ask about ASME because they want to hear about the traits that I have acquired that other students might not have. With uncertain economic conditions, students will need all the help they can get to obtain job offers, and ASME is the perfect platform to help them do so.

I believe all the members who attended the banquet found it extremely beneficial to hear not only from one of their professors, but also from an ASME member who has been involved in the organization for a long time.

I could not stress enough to our new members that it is imperative to be ambitious in their extracurricular activities because they will reap the benefits in the future. ASME has given me leadership skills, allowed me to meet great people in the College of Engineering, and has improved my college experience immensely. Hopefully over the coming months and years our new members will realize how valuable ASME can be for their college careers as well.



Fall Student Leadership Seminar

By Adam Ringstad
Former Conference Chair

This semester's Student Leadership Seminar (SLS) was held on October 8th and 9th. The Student Leadership Seminar, or more informally called the fall conference, is where students and faculty from all over the Midwest gather to discuss great ways to get involved in ASME, discuss new ideas on how to raise money for your chapter, and hear keynote speakers talk about the diverse and ever changing field of engineering. The conference took place at the University of Illinois-Champaign/Urbana campus. The first events for this semester's conference were scheduled to start around 7

pm on Friday, October 8th. Due to bad traffic around the Rockford area, we were not able to arrive at our final destination until around 9 pm. At this time, it was agreed that it was too late to join the social activity of indoor ice skating that was already in progress, so we just decided to check into the hotel. We stayed at the Illini Union Hotel, which was pretty cool because it was an older building (similar to our union at the University of Wisconsin) and there were various events going on downstairs. After we checked in and were settled down in the room, some of us went out to see what the town had to offer (in our Badger gear, of course). The next day, the events started early in the Mechanical Engineer-

ing building on campus, and we learned about fundraising ideas, different ways to recruit potential ASME members, and tips on engineering industry communication from a keynote speaker. Finally, the event wrapped up with several students discussing their success in their respective schools with regards to ASME. Our ASME chair, Nick Edwards, spoke about how the University of Wisconsin-Madison has found success in fundraising, recruitment, and involvement in ASME. Overall, the conference was a lot of fun and it was a great way for us to learn more about leadership opportunities within ASME.

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