

MINORITY
ENGINEERING
PROGRAM
OFFICE

EXCELLENCE

101

ISSUE ONE
FIRST EDITION
WINTER 1997

Auburn University
College of Engineering
<http://www.eng.auburn.edu>

Dennis W. Weatherby, MEP director, 6810
Miriam J. Carter, MEP Facilitator, 6811
Miriam G. Chen, MEP Facilitator, 6811

Auburn's Minority Engineering Program Blends Academics, Nurturing Environment

In August, 1996, Auburn University's College of Engineering initiated its first Minority Engineering Program (MEP). The MEP is a series of activities and academically based programs designed to increase the recruitment and enhance the retention of African-Americans in engineering. Currently, African-Americans comprise about 6 percent of Auburn's engineering students.

Historical data indicate that in general, African-American students in Auburn University's engineering programs encounter greater obstacles to academic success than their non-minority counterparts. These obstacles are primarily related to academic preparation and assimilation into the AU culture. The barriers seem most overwhelming during the students' freshman and sophomore years. Therefore, the MEP is focusing its efforts on these transition quarters to facilitate the students' assimilation into their respective engineering programs.

The MEP consists of one-on-one mentoring, counseling, and tutoring in entry level science and mathematics. Program leaders also conduct college success strategy seminars/workshops and are helping to provide a more nurturing environment that facilitates networking within the AU culture. The Minority Engineering Program

Office is located in 107 Ramsay Hall and is directed by Dennis Weatherby.

Sunday Evening Tutorials Co-Sponsored by NSBE

During the 1996 fall quarter, the Minority Engineering Program and the AU chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers co-sponsored tutorials on Sunday evening. Students who attend receive extra help in entry-level mathematics, chemistry and physics courses. The sessions integrate a variety of tutoring formats to better foster learning through student group and student-tutor interaction. The tutors are volunteers. They are all engineering students who have achieved proficiency in the technical courses in which they tutor. During the fall quarter, 16 tutors participated in the Sunday evening sessions by assisting students one-on-one. Students openly exchanged problem-solving ideas and methods as well via the chalkboard.

The idea is to create a forum where students in need of academic help are at ease in openly asking questions, and to promote an environment conducive to camaraderie and study.

The tutorials will continue to be offered during winter quarter on Sunday evenings from 6 - 8 p.m., on the third floor of Parker Hall.

Adjusting to College

Picking Up Good Habits Is Essential to Your Success

The first quarter of a freshmen student's academic year can be a time of immense pressure and frustration. Adjusting to a vast, expansive college environment and culture can be overwhelming. For many, it is especially discouraging when they feel they've worked hard, followed the prescriptions for success they learned in high school, and done their best, but have little academic success. Their dream of becoming an engineer, a goal they've been working toward since grade school, seems to be fading away.



Don't give up! Hang in there! Many students have faced the same dilemma during the transition phase of college, but have persevered and gone on to graduate and become successful engineers.

Probably the most significant thing you will learn during your first quarter is that Auburn University is not like high school. It is far more rigorous. However, what you should always remember is that you are intelligent. Don't let anyone tell you different. Your first quarter at Auburn only reflects a need for more self-discipline, strategic preparation, and self-confidence, but the potential for intellectual growth is always there!

Take what you've learned about yourself and the AU culture and resolve to continually strive for excellence. Here are a few things to consider as you achieve:

1. Working hard is not the same as working smart. Many students spend hours on end trying to solve homework problems - alone. Seek out serious study partners in your field and form study groups. In study groups, not only do you learn to solve homework problems more efficiently, but you learn various problem-solving methods and techniques from your peers. Understanding different ways of attacking problems is very useful during examinations because it decreases the likelihood of "getting stuck."
2. Beware of time thieves. Learn to say no to associates who want to socialize during times you've set

aside for studying or completing assignments. Saying 'no' to partying, movies, etc., does not make you a terrible person. Prioritize and stick to your schedule.

3. Do not overdose on extracurricular activities. Since the day you arrived on campus, there have been so many groups, clubs and organizations competing for your out-of-class time. And because these activities are officially sanctioned and supported by Auburn University, you feel a need to oblige anyone who asks for your participation. NOT! If your schedule does not allow one and a half hours of study for each hour of class you need to trim your extracurricular activities.

4. Don't be afraid to ask for help. If there are concepts you do not understand, seek out those in your course who are proficient and ask for their assistance, or ask to become a part of their study group. Also, the purpose of the instructor's office hours is for students to get academic help and advice. If there is something you don't understand, don't be intimidated. Schedule an appointment.

5. Make it your trademark to be on time for class. Students who walk into a class late not only distract other students and the instructor, but have enormous difficulty following the lecture and end up not being able to complete assignments or pass exams.

The Minority Engineering Office has an excellent brochure called "Keys To College Success." Stop by 107 Ramsay Hall, and get your copy.

Profile In Excellence . . .

One of the most rewarding aspects of a faculty and staff member's career at Auburn is to observe a success story in the making. It is especially refreshing to know that you've played a part in a student's success. Such students have responded well to mentoring and nurturing by excelling academically. In addition, these students often take up the banner by becoming role models and peer mentors to underclassmen during their college years.

Auburn University's James L. Dixon personifies what the results of mentoring should be.

Dixon is a graduating senior in mechanical engineering from Montgomery. His home environment was conducive to academic success and helped cultivate in him an interest in engineering.

"Both my parents are school teachers in the Montgomery County Public Schools. However, my father's hobbies sparked my interest in engineering. My father loves drag racing and builds and repairs race cars at home in the garage," he says with a grin.

Dixon has had an opportunity to observe first-hand his father's extensive mechanical knowledge and in

turn, the exposure kindled a desire to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering.

While attending Sidney Lanier High School in Montgomery, Dixon won many honors, including the Montgomery Advertiser Distinguished Scholar Athlete of the Year Award. He was a National Achievement Finalist as well.

During his time at Auburn, Dixon has given of his academic talents to others. He was selected by the College of Engineering as a student tutor, tutoring in the calculus series, engineering physics series, circuits, statics, and strength of materials.

He was also selected to represent Auburn University in the National Science Foundation sponsored summer research program at UAB, where he took first place honors in a summer internship exhibit competition.

He is vice president of Pi Tau Sigma honor society and is a member of a number of additional honor societies, including Lambda Sigma national honor society.

As a tutor, Dixon has played an instrumental roll in helping to initiate one of the Minority Engineering Program's components: the Sunday evening tutorials.

He attributes his success to a number of positive influences in his life.

"I have been blessed to have parents who instilled in me positive values, kept my eyes focused on long term goals and taught me the importance of perseverance and hard work. Dr. Nick Conrad, Mrs. Raya Zalik and Dr. Overton Jenda have made a very positive difference in my academic career here at Auburn University as well."

Dixon is expected to graduate at the end of winter quarter, and has received several job offers. His near-term goal is to obtain an MBA while working full-time as an engineer.

Dixon's success is not miraculous, but is a result of fortitude and dedication. "The most important things that have brought me to this point and that will make me a success in the future are hard work, perseverance, and most importantly, faith in God.

"God is the one who blesses us all with our talents and our skills and through him there is no limit to what anyone can achieve."

Scholarship Opportunities

National F.F.A. Foundation Minority Scholarship. Applicant must be a Black American, Asian-American, native American, Pacific Islander, or hispanic American. Must be a FFA member planning to pursue a degree in any area of agriculture. Must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.0 to renew scholarship. Application period is between December 1 and February 15. Scholarship award amount is \$5,000 to \$10,000. Write: National F.F.A. Foundation, Scholarship Office, P. O. Box 15160, Alexandria, VA 22309-0160.

Amoco Foundation Undergraduate Scholarship Program. Open to full-time African-American, American Indian or Hispanic American juniors and seniors pursuing an engineering or science degree. Scholarship award is \$500 to \$1250 per year, renewable. Students must apply through participating institutions. Write: Amoco Foundation Scholarship Program, 200 East Randolph Drive, Chicago, IL 60601.



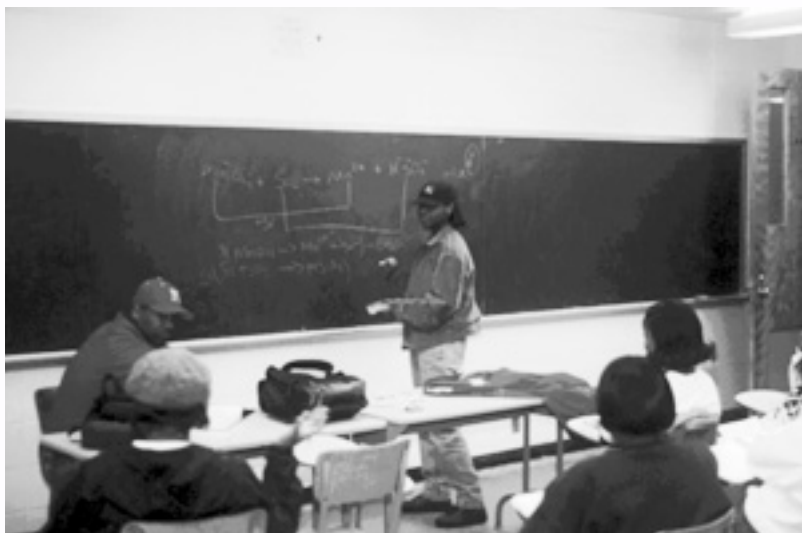
National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering. Open to African-Americans, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans and American Indians who are U. S. citizens or permanent residents. Must be enrolled full time in an undergraduate, degree granting engineering program at one of the participating schools, and maintain a 2.5 GPA. Scholarships are \$500 to \$3000 per year, renewable. Write: NACME Incentive Grants Program, 3 West 35 Street, New York, NY 10001-2281.

Photo Gallery . . .



Dixon has played a key role in helping to launch the MEP. Here, he assists students in calculus at a tutorial session.

Charlinda Paige, right, receives assistance from Carol Chancey, a graduate student in mechanical engineering.



Monica Hagler, standing, and Sid Rowser, left, tutor freshmen students in chemistry during Sunday evening tutorials.