

Engineering Neighborhood Holds a Welcome Back Student Block Party

By Brad Stager

Nothing says, “Welcome to the neighborhood,” like a block party where you get a chance to meet new neighbors, or classmates, and find out what kind of opportunities some of the College of Engineering student clubs, chapters and activities offer. Whether a student is studying nanotechnology or the construction of landmark projects like bridges, there is surely an engineering-related student organization to fit their needs.

This year’s event took place on August 24, with Sugar and Ice and All Things Nice serving up designer cotton candy and shaved ice treats to try to take the edge off a bright, hot, summer day. Students lined up for free t-shirts and made the rounds of the professional and academic organizations that were represented such as the USF chapter of American Water Works Association (AWWA) Florida Section.

James Reid is the vice president for the USF chapter and he says students joining AWWA get a chance to learn about what kinds of work engineers who provide drinking water to the world actually do.

“It’s a professional organization and it’s a great way to get real world experience and meet people who work in it every day,” says Reid, who is also the events coordinator for the USF chapter of the Florida Water Environment Association (FWEA). Reid adds that the two student organizations work together to promote a “One Water” approach to professional growth and development, and that it’s exemplified by the practice panel sessions AWWA is holding for USF’s FWEA team that is participating in the student design competition at the Water Environment Federation's Technical Exhibition and Conference (WEFTEC) in Chicago, September 30 through October 4.

“We helped FWEA through their coming and presenting with us and with a panel of water industry professionals.”

Engineers with leadership skills and experience may find additional career opportunities opening up to them, according to Roth Marcelin, who is the Chapter President of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) at USF.

“It’s helped me break out of my shell,” says Marcelin, who is a senior studying computer science.

Senior Jevon Hendrickson finds membership in NSBE is making a difference in his grades.

“We hold study groups as well as get a lot of tips from graduate students who’ve gone on to doctoral programs,” says Hendrickson, who is studying electrical engineering. “As a group, we help each other out.”

In April the USF Chapter of NSBE earned recognition as Region 3 Medium Chapter of the Year, at the National Society’s 43rd Annual Convention.

Society of Women Engineers (SWE) President Michaelah Park says the USF chapter is committed to helping its members gain a variety of skills to get them ready for successful careers.

“We do professional development workshops for all of our students.”

Park, who is studying mechanical engineering, also says the USF chapter hopes to help support members who want to go to the SWE National Conference being held October 26-29 in Austin, Texas.

“It’s the largest career fair for women engineers in the world.” Park adds that USF-SWE membership is open to anyone.

For students interested in hands-on extracurricular activities, X-Labs, with its array of different-size Tesla coils and household items repurposed in the name of technology, might be a good fit.

“X-Labs is a club for students that want to learn what engineers do,” says President Dillon Buffone, who is an electrical engineering graduate student. “It’s for students who like to make cool things.” In the process of making cool things, students will use 3D printers, laser cutters and other high-tech production tools. One of the projects on Buffone’s to-do list this year is construction of a second 10-foot Tesla coil. X-Labs is known for its Tesla coils and the club’s collection is

featured in an episode of the Science Channel's television program, Street Science, scheduled to broadcast this fall.

If there's one organization that ties it all together, that would probably be the Engineering Honor Society, Tau Beta Pi, which honors students of all engineering disciplines who demonstrate academic achievement and a commitment to personal and professional integrity. The USF chapter was established in 1974 and a marker bearing the name of the chapter and a sculpted likeness of the Tau Beta Pi official badge, called the Bent (a watch key in the shape of the bent of a trestle) is located at the west end of the events area behind ENB.

Ghulam Jilani Quadri is the society's public relations coordinator. He says the group is planning to raise money to refurbish the marker and change the landscaping surrounding it. He also says students who get involved in this and other Tau Beta Pi projects will benefit from their time and effort.

"We're helping students' careers by having meaningful projects for them."

If you want to find out more about these and other College of Engineering student organizations, you can use the new BullSync app to research them or visit online at usfstudentorganizations.orgsync.com.