

College helped grad engineer career success

Thursday, 15 March 2007

Last Updated Sunday, 30 March 2008

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An Article published on the Times, Sunday, January 28, 2007 5:02 PM CST

(http://nwitimes.com/articles/2007/01/28/opinion/guest_commentaries/476441bac75f3e938625726e000f77ce.txt)

by Howard Cohen

In the eyes of Hammond native Bryan Robles, an aerospace engineer at the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Ala., the term "the sky's the limit" is too -- well -- limiting.

Brian is twice a graduate from Purdue Calumet, receiving his bachelor's degree in engineering in 2000 and his master's degree in engineering in 2002. Bryan designs rockets for space exploration. At NASA, Bryan is part of the Aerothermodynamics Analysis Group helping design the Ares and Orion vehicles for our return to the moon and, possibly, a journey to Mars.

At Purdue Calumet, Bryan studied computational fluid dynamics (mathematical and computer modeling of the flow of fluids) with Professor Chenn Zhou. He credits what he learned in her classes as playing a key role in every analysis he does as he tries to figure out how to place critical instruments in rockets so they will withstand the tremendous heat of a trip into space.

In an online interview, Bryan said, "The majority of my design and analysis could not be accomplished without the knowledge gained in my undergraduate and graduate studies at Purdue Calumet."

It takes engineers to design everything from the basics of life (automobile parts, highways, production processes) to our most advanced products (computers, medical devices, robots). That explains the steady demand for graduates of Purdue Calumet's mechanical, electrical, computer and civil engineering programs.

Indeed, there is growing national concern that American universities are not producing enough engineers to maintain our global leadership in innovative technology. Economists Michael Boskin and Lawrence Lau estimate about half of the U.S. economic growth since World War II has been the result of technological innovation. Engineers translate new ideas into things that work.

Bryan credits Purdue Calumet's high-quality faculty who are committed to helping individual students succeed as a big part of the reason NASA has given his work quality and performance as "Superior Excellence" -- a rare distinction.

In fact, Purdue Calumet's engineering programs are rated among the nation's best for universities that offer bachelors and masters degrees only.

During his interview, Bryan responded he truly appreciated the accessibility of the faculty. "They showed a willingness to help people to better understand the subject at hand outside of the classroom," he said.

Like most Purdue Calumet students, Bryan also had the opportunity to spend three semesters as an intern in a manufacturing company, putting his classroom and laboratory knowledge to work in a corporate setting.

Students like Bryan, who dream of making a big contribution to human progress, must prepare themselves with a college education. We are proud that they are able to complete their preparation right here in Northwest Indiana.