

### **Who I Am**

Mechanical Engineering is one of the most difficult undergraduate degrees, requiring a great amount of personal dedication and perseverance. My name is Anthony Drew Hood, and I am pursuing such a degree at Purdue University. I chose Mechanical Engineering because of my love of making things and finding better, easier ways to accomplish tasks. My decision to pursue Mechanical Engineering was reinforced after attending the STEP program at Purdue University during the summer. The STEP program was centered on students with an interest in Engineering, but who were not completely convinced. After having participated in STEP, I set my heart on Mechanical Engineering and decided to attend Purdue University instead of Rose-Hulman. From the second I set foot on the West Lafayette Campus I felt completely at home.



I have never doubted my choice of Purdue University; when I see and hear how Purdue graduates are working all over the world, I feel very proud and honored at the chance to study at such a renowned university.

### **What I have done**

I am taking a slightly different path than the typical Mechanical Engineering student since I am a Co-Op. My plan of study is going to take six and a half years, but the extra time is well worth it seeing that I will graduate with almost a year and a half of work experience and two Mechanical Engineering degrees.

I started my Co-Op a semester late because of a passion that I have had nearly all of my life. This love started in my early Boy Scout years when I was first introduced to backpacking. My father, being very active in my Boy Scout career, also became obsessed with backpacking. To satisfy our longing we decided to attempt the 2100-mile long Appalachian Trail. At the beginning of college, before I had decided to pursue a Co-Op plan of study, I started preparing for a lengthy hike the summer after my freshmen year. Since I had already completed roughly 900 miles of this historic trail in stages, I decided

to be ambitious and attempt a 1200-mile hike. Previously the longest single hike I had completed was 400 miles. In the end, I fell short of my goal but completed a still impressive 800-mile adventure in 50 days. It was not from a lack of planning or time, but from being alone in the woods truly reflecting upon life. I concluded that the Appalachian Trail would always be there, while my friends and family might not. The lifespan of a trail through the woods is exponentially longer than that of a human being.

After my summer in the Appalachian woods, I realized that the wilderness is not as indestructible as I first had thought. The thought that The Trail might not always be there has given me a new determination to become a Mechanical engineer. This goal is not because of the salary, but because this world needs better, cleaner, less harmful ways of living or the beauty of nature may not outlive me.

Upon coming to Purdue, I was a little concerned about my lack of job experience, because quite simply, I had never held a summer job while in high school due to my heavy involvement in other activities. I was very involved in Boy Scouts, receiving the highest rank, Eagle Scout. I ran track and cross country, earning various awards from "Most Improved Runner" to "Most Valuable Distance Runner", and was team captain in each my senior year. 4-H also took up large amount of my time; I earned Grand Champion and State Fair entries four times in category of miniature scale model building. Although I had participated in a great deal of activities, I was still concerned that my lack of work experience would cause problems when trying to find a job after graduation. After sharing my feeling with some friends and relatives, the term "Co-Op" was mentioned several times, so when Purdue had a call out I decided to investigate. After filling out some forms and compiling my resume, I had interviews with my top five companies and waited for an offer. To my astonishment, I received and accepted an offer from NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas. I will start my first work session January 4, 2009. A year and a half ago I would have laughed at anyone who told me that by the end of my freshmen year I would have an offer for one of the most renowned organization in the world, NASA.

### **What I plan to do**

Presently it is not very difficult to see where my career is heading. I am planning on working at NASA over the next four years while I completing my undergraduate degree in Mechanical Engineering. I am strongly considering participating in a new BSME/MSME program that Purdue University is offering. This program allows a student to earn both a bachelors and masters degree in Mechanical Engineering with a five-year plan of study. Since I am already taking five years to conclude the Co-Op program, it will take me a total of six years to complete this combined BSME/MSME program.

I hope that through my combined BSME/MSME degree from Purdue University and my Co-Op experience at NASA Johnson Space Center I can help to lessen the impact that the human race has on this amazing planet earth which we refer to as home. I anticipate when I have long since graduated and am well on my way to the grave, there will still be wilderness in the world that my children, their children, and many generations to follow will be able to enjoy. The wilderness played such an amazing and vital role in placing me where I am today. My time in the wilderness has taught me to value what I have, to not be greedy, and to live with nature, not against it. We as a collective human race need to

make a drastic about-face in the way we are treating this world or the following generations many not have a world at all.