

Purdue Mechanical Engineering: Travis C. Langdon

A Brief Introduction



I have attempted to live by three rules throughout my high school and college career. These rules are “Work hard.” “Stay balanced.” “Serve others.” I believe that I have succeeded to live by them for the most part. In high school, my schedule included many difficult classes, yet my 11.111 grade point average ranked in the top five percent of a strong academic class. This high standing in high school has helped me obtain many of my goals that I set for myself early on in high school. I have wanted to study mechanical engineering ever since my freshman year of high school. And over the past several years, I have come to realize it is a great match for my talents and interests. I have always loved hands-on learning, designing, and building...

tearing into the family Nintendo system, wiring appliances for my grandma, building sets for high school productions, re-lamping the Knights of Columbus hall, repairing my '93 Ford F-150 pickup truck, etc. So, after an extensive college search, I narrowed my college choices down to three Indiana schools, Rose Hulman Technical Institute, Valparaiso University, and Purdue University. They all have excellent reputations, and I was honored to be accepted by each. However, in the end I chose Purdue University, a prestigious, nationally respected engineering school.

Experience and Skills

Attending such a prestigious university is quite a blessing, especially for me, since it is in state. However, attending any university now and days is expensive. I am very grateful that my parents are paying for 1/3 of my college expenses (tuition, room and board, and food). But that leaves 2/3 for me to pay on my own. In order to make up this difference I saved throughout high school, working several “odd jobs” and one part-time job. I also spent a lot of time my senior year applying for scholarships, which has also aided me in affording these expenses. After high school I realized that I was still very short of making ends meet, so I had to take out a loan and get a full time summer job. I found that the most amount of money that I could make in a limited amount of time would be at Pioneer Hybrid. At this job I worked on the machines that drive through corn fields, threw 60 pound bags of corn, and walked through corn fields all day. Doing this labor intensive job, I worked up to 65 hours per week, Monday through Sunday. I really developed a good work ethic from this job, along with a great appreciation for my education. I also earned just enough every summer to survive one year at college.

I believe that my passion to serve reflects empathy that I developed through my own trials and tribulations, including extreme shyness that I finally overcame through the high school speech team. I have spent many, many hours volunteering my time and talents. Although most of this effort did not make the front page, it helped others less fortunate, as well as, set an example for my peers. The service I performed was not mandated,

short-term, or intended to build a resume. It was voluntary, representing significant commitments of my time and talents, and was intended to truly make a difference. Most of this service was through Key Club, which I have been an officer of for four years and president my senior year. One example of community service we do in Key Club is raising \$2,500 for needy Marshall County families with the Light-A-Tree Project. After a month of hard work, it was rewarding to deliver \$220 to each of eight families, as well as a donation to the Victims' Assistance Program. I would also volunteer my time every Monday after school for the last two years of high school to help tutor elementary and junior high students at Plymouth Public Library. While also on the Marshall County Rebuilding Together Board of Directors, I helped recruit high school volunteers for upcoming Christmas in April projects.

I have always been involved in many extra-curricular activities. I have participated in anything from the varsity tennis team to working backstage at musicals. All of which prepared me for any position or activity in either college or after that involved teamwork and leadership. As a freshman at Purdue I participated in Boiler Gold Rush (BGR), a weeklong freshman orientation program that not only helps freshmen to get used to the campus, but helps them adjust to being away from friends and family for the first time. So for a week I was shown around and talked to by an upperclassman at Purdue. He was known as a team leader or a TL. When I saw all of the time and effort that my TL had put in to making this week special for me, I realized that this is something that I would like to do for incoming freshmen next year. I thought that I would just let the BGR office know of my interest, they would be grateful to have another volunteer, and I would be a TL next year. However, I did not realize what a competitive position this was, even with around 500 spots available. The application process consisted of three essays, a sit-down interview, an impromptu speech, and a team working exercise. After all of that they narrowed down the nearly 1000 applicants to around 500. Fortunately, I was one who was granted a position. From there I had to participate in four trainings that were each four to eight hours long. Each of which really took me out of my comfort zone. They had me settling simulated arguments between peers in front of a group, learning a dance, participating in skits, etc. By being a part of all of this I feel like I really gained a lot of confidence in myself and really understood how to lead a group. In the end, all of the training paid off. The week of BRG was really fun and I had the chance to put into affect all of the skills that I was taught at the training.

The Not So Distant Future

The job market for engineers, especially mechanical, is expected to remain strong into the foreseeable future. I have been told employers favor mechanical engineers because they are "hands on" and "balanced". As such, I am confident I will be able to find employment in my field of choice and in the city of my choice, Indianapolis. When I was young, I couldn't imagine leaving Plymouth. As I grew older, I thought I wanted to live far away from Plymouth and Indiana. But now, being in college away from home for the first time, I realize the importance of being close to home, and that Indiana is a great state with lots of opportunity. I plan to make Indiana an even greater state through my professional and personal life. No matter what career I end up going into, I will work to

find new sources of energy whether it be indirectly or directly. I will attempt to either fund research or participate in the actual research and development through my career. This way we can further the development of energy from either fusion or solar power.