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We have just admitted the fifth class to the MEPP program. Every class except the first one has been filled to capacity. Of the 84 students in the first three classes, all but one student has successfully completed their MEPP degree. Surveys of the first three graduating classes reveal that more than half of MEPP graduates receive significant promotions before they graduate — advancements for which they give the program significant credit. Surveys of alumni, their co-workers and family members indicate MEPP alumni are exercising new leadership skills, professionally and personally. I think it’s working. We also know the program can be even better.

Since its beginning, MEPP has been committed to walking the path of continuous improvement. MEPP’s evaluation program includes evaluations of each course by students and instructors, a program evaluation by all graduates, and a follow-up program impact survey of all alumni 9-12 months after graduation. (See the article by Greg Kearsley discussing further details of MEPP’s evaluation efforts.) These evaluations have resulted in significant changes to the program, including major redesigns of courses and course materials, the reordering of courses, and changes to the online campus learning environment. Recently Greg Kearsley helped us with a study to benchmark MEPP’s evaluation efforts with those of other leading graduate school programs across the US. We were pleasantly surprised to find that MEPP’s evaluation efforts were among the most consistent and rigorous of graduate degree programs anywhere. Thank you, students and alumni, for your consistent help in evaluating and improving the program. And thanks to all staff for your unswerving commitment to excellence of instruction and student support.

Now that “the experiment” has proven successful, the College of Engineering is leveraging its experience by creating new programs that build from the lessons learned in creating MEPP. The College launched its second Web-based graduate degree, the Master of Engineering in Engine Systems (MEES), this summer. MEES builds on the College’s strength as one of the top engine research institutions in the world. Faculty from the Engine Research Center and the Powertrain Research Control Laboratory have come together to design and deliver a curriculum that gives engineers in the engine industry the technical understanding and management skills needed to manage major engine development projects. Two MEPP alumni, Bruce Dennert and Brian Price, both with Harley-Davidson, have been instrumental in helping to design the program and specific courses. MEES, like MEPP, is designed to provide an exceptional educational experience for a small group of experienced engineers, building on strategic strengths in the College.

For more information about the MEES program and all of the distance degrees currently offered by the College of Engineering, see http://distancedegrees. engr. wisc. edu/
Focus on Alumni

Alumni Prepare for New MAD Series
By Don Schramm

Welcome to the Class of 2003 and hello again to the Classes of 2001 and 2002!

Summer Residency workshops and distance learning sessions have been part of the MEPP Alumni Development (MAD) Series, which started in 2001. Past MAD topics have included managing new product introductions, coaching skills, engineering data communication, facilitating engineering team projects, and Webconferencing applications.

Now we’re planning the third MEPP Alumni Development Series, which will again include evening WisLine Web sessions and another August workshop in Madison. We’re in the process of tallying alumni votes on selected topics, such as engineering ethics, engineering and the law, creativity, marketing and sales, wireless networks, new product introductions and more.

WisLine Web Schedule
WisLine Web sessions for MEPP graduates will be offered at no cost. Online sessions are scheduled for 6:00-9:00 pm Central Time on the following dates:
Wednesday, January 21
Welcome and Open Discussion
Wednesday, February 18
Topic to Be Announced
Wednesday, March 17
Topic to Be Announced
Wednesday, April 14
Topic to Be Announced
Wednesday, May 12
Closing and Open Discussion

August Alumni Workshop
In addition to the WisLine Web sessions, an August Alumni Workshop will be held in Madison for the first two days of the MEPP Residency on August 23-24, 2004. This course will be available at a reduced cost and open only to MEPP graduates.

Final selection of topics and other information on the series will be posted in MEPP Community and e-mailed to alumni. For questions please contact Don Schramm at schramm@epd.engr.wisc.edu

Message from the Alumni President

Just a short 28 months ago, the first cohort of MEPP graduates walked across the dais at the Kohl Center and received their diplomas. Now with each passing year, the number of individuals added to the alumni ranks continues to grow. While we can never hope to reach the same quantity of alumni from the MEPP program as what the UW can boast, we can make every effort to outdo them in quality.

As the current alumni president, I am going to make a concerted effort this year to keep in touch better than what I did last year. With everything that transpired last year, I did a very good job of falling off the turnip truck and not keeping up-to-speed with everything that was going on. In order to accomplish this, however, I am going to need your assistance. Remember that this is your alumni group, and without you we are just another chat room. Stay connected. Stay in touch. Stay active. I know that I cannot expect you to stay as active as you were during the two years you were taking courses, but please stay involved as much as possible.

During the second MEPP Alumni Development Series (MAD) summer workshop, a number of us had the opportunity (over a few barley pops) to brainstorm a few topics and activities that we would like to accomplish over the next several years. Throughout the coming year we would like to continue this discussion and possibly bring several of these ideas to fruition.

Over the course of the next several weeks, please take a look in the alumni section of the MEPP Web site, where we will get the original brainstorm summary reposted for everybody to review. Shortly after that I will kick off a discussion topic, and if necessary we can coordinate an evening get together.

If anybody has any questions, comments, concerns or critiques, please feel free to get in touch with me.

Glen Rauwerdink
Alumni President
Focus on Faculty: Jake Blanchard
By Greg Kearsley

Jake Blanchard teaches *Engineering Problem Solving with Computers* (EPSC), which MEPP students take in their second semester. He holds a BS in mechanical engineering, an MS in engineering, and a PhD in nuclear engineering, all from UCLA. His research interests include: nuclear microbatteries, fusion technology, laser-induced stress, surface characterization, and reactor vessel embrittlement – clearly what’s needed to get us to warp speed in the future. He has taught a number of courses related to numerical and computational analysis on and off campus. In fact, he’s such a good teacher, he has received many teaching awards including the UW Distinguished Teaching Award in 2002.

Besides all the scholarly activities, Jake is an avid curler – and if you don’t know what curling is, you’ve obviously never lived north of the 40th latitude!

When asked what he likes most about teaching in MEPP, he said “I most enjoy interacting with the students in the program. Their experience in the field brings a sense of reality to what we do and they can provide valuable feedback to improve the course. Of course, it is also gratifying to help the students become more productive and do their jobs better.”

To learn more about Jake Blanchard, see his home page at http://silver.neep.wisc.edu/~jake

From the Forum
Message from Bruce Wallin ('02)

*(From the Alumni Forum, Message no. 497. Congratulations, Bruce and thank you for your comments on MEPP’s role in your selection.)*

I have been selected an Associate Fellow in the field of Dynamics at Hamilton Sundstrand. The designation requires being internationally recognized within the aerospace industry as an expert in a technical field. The selection requires unanimous approval by the engineering VPs and directors representing all of our domestic and international divisions. The supporters of my nomination included Boeing, Northrop Grumman, Pratt & Whitney, Impact Technologies, US Naval Air Command, Rolls-Royce (UK), Teijin Seiki (Japan) and Nissan Aerospace (Japan).

There are currently 22 Fellows at Hamilton Sundstrand out of over 3500 engineers, and there are about 100 Fellows across UTC with over 200,000 employees. The position is somewhat equivalent to a Chief Engineer, but at UTC Chiefs represent product lines and Fellows represent technical disciplines across all product lines. Also, Chiefs are assigned locally within a division as opposed to being selected by corporate-wide nominating committee.

My primary responsibilities are to provide in-house training and mentoring, expand our capabilities within the discipline, and represent UTC in both industrial and academic technical committees. I anticipate spending more of my time as a technical reviewer at critical design reviews across our product lines and supporting failure investigation teams in their root cause analysis process. Besides the usual perks I receive an annual personal education stipend of $3-10K to support my continuing education and committee work. The family and I will be traveling to Hartford the last week of October for induction ceremonies.

Although my new position is for specific technical expertise I believe the MEPP program was very beneficial and a big part in my successful nomination. I still use many of the tools we learned daily; especially the teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills. I think it greatly helped my self-esteem (I can do that!) and showed continued support for life long learning. As long as I hold this position I am guaranteed not to have any direct reports (yeah!!!!!) but I think the engineering management skills taught in MEPP really help me understand the “business” going on around me.
Focus on Students

Welcome MEPP Class of 2005
The Class of 2005 has come together marvelously this summer during Network Skills and Residency. We wish them great success in learning more than they could imagine over the next two years!

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Residency Wrap-up
By Karen Al-Ashkar

Other than a trip to China for one student, and the impending birth of a first child for another, both MEPP cohorts were present and accounted for. Everyone came prepared for academic “boot camp” and a very busy week.

Dean Peercy attended the opening reception and gave the keynote welcoming address on Sunday evening. Students are pleased with the amount of attention the College of Engineering has given to our program and enjoyed hearing the dean’s comments and reflections. We capped off the day with a trip to Union South for bowling and billiards … some pretty good bowlers, enthusiastic billiard players, and lots of really good sports!

Monday morning, bright and early, alumni Bruce Dennert ('02) gave the keynote address to both cohorts. Bruce’s talk, “You Own Your Future,” focused on managing your career. We appreciated Bruce's insights and comments based on his own professional experiences.

Following the keynote address, boot camp began. The Class of 2005 reviewed campus policies and MEPP procedures and recapped their Network Skills experiences. The Class of 2004 began the week with presentations of their Independent Reading Research in Applied Engineering projects on Monday morning and afternoon. They also shared these presentations at lunch throughout the week with staff, members of both cohorts, and faculty.

Monday evening the Class of 2004 and MEPP alumni hosted a joint mentoring session on “How to Succeed in MEPP.” Thanks to everyone who participated — and special thanks to the alumni who took time to attend!

The alumni workshop on facilitating teams also began on Monday. These annual presentations for alumni provide an opportunity to update skills as well as to stay in touch with others in the MEPP community.
Tuesday
Students in both classes participated in concurrent sessions that introduced fall courses. These sessions included lots of group activities, team building, meeting the instructors face to face and gaining a better understanding of the course expectations. As a reward for a hard day, we spent the evening together touring the Capital Brewery and eating great pizza.

Wednesday
The Class of 2005 continued learning about fall courses while members of the Class of 2004 not only got an introduction to their second fall course, but also reviewed their experiences in the program and shared with MEPP staff what's working and what could be improved. This is feedback we use every year to keep the program on a track of continuous improvement.

Thursday
Thursday dawned bright and clear with the Class of 2004 reviewing library use and the last of their spring courses. They also elected a class president. Congratulations, Dick Felker! After lunch they went their separate ways to meet again at commencement next May, which they all plan to attend!

Meanwhile the Class of 2005 received additional library instruction and previewed the rest of their upcoming curriculum. In the evening they participated in a team-building workshop facilitated by Adventure Learning Programs. Family members and others joined in on fun activities (like the peanut butter river) that promoted teamwork and communication skills. This new activity was so successful that we plan to build it into future residencies.

Friday
For the last day of the week, first-year students wrapped up spring course introductions and shared reflections on the program and Residency Week experiences. We have some great suggestions from this group and, as usual, these will be used to improve the program.

There's a lot more to Residency Week than meets the eye, and it's not possible to discuss everything in a short article. However, the value of this week continues to grow, with students, faculty, and staff.

Feature: Clear the Decks
By Karen Al-Ashkar

Maggie Honaker, Class of 2003, was dismayed by the amount of clutter she encountered every day in her office. One of 57 professionals in a unit that supports 50 manufacturing sites for the Kellogg Company, Maggie was concerned about the amount of time it took to wade through the mass of paper to find information pertinent to site projects.

So Maggie took her concerns to one of her company’s vice presidents and presented her ideas for resolving the clutter issue faced by everyone in her unit. According to Maggie, her "Office Organizational Initiative" was heartily approved by the vice president—not so much because he was bothered by the clutter, but because he was afraid the fire sprinkler system would be ineffective if all that paper went up in flames!

The clutter issue became the focus of her project for Independent Research and Reading in Applied Engineering. Her IRRAE advisor had some suggestions to augment Maggie's ideas and helped keep Maggie on track during the summer.

The initiative involved organizing shared space for shared equipment, rearranging furniture to maximize usability, and putting as much information into electronic formats as possible, both to facilitate retrieval and to reduce paper clutter. Maggie and her colleagues produced more than 18 barrels of shredded records during the reorganization!

Since visiting many of the sites supported by her unit requires substantial travel, retrieval and portability of information were essential components of the project. As Maggie said, “You can't take your desk with you.”

Maggie reports that her colleagues are still enthusiastic about the new “tools” they're using and that gradually a paradigm shift from reliance on paper records to a reliance on digital records is occurring. She also reports that it looks a lot neater in her unit and, more importantly to Maggie, takes far less time to collect specific information and to be prepared for road trips. Congratulations, Maggie!
Feature: Commencement 2003
By Wayne Pferdehirt

Congratulations to all 30 members of the MEPP Class of 2003, who graduated May 17, 2003. The Classes of 2001 and 2002 will be glad to know the 2003’ers sustained and advanced the tradition of making this a very special weekend for graduates and their families. Some highlights include:

- Sharing memories, plans, and laughs at a “Looking Back and Looking Forward” on Saturday afternoon at the Fluno Center. Class of 2003 President Mark Goldsmith and Tom Garrahy conferred “awards” on graduates and staff alike, all in good humor.

- A fun party on a beautiful spring Saturday night at Karen and Sal Al-Ashkar’s. The Class of 2002 provided cake and ice cream, delivered by Dick Felker.

- Spouses, children, parents, and even some grandparents joined in a very special Commencement Brunch at the Pyle Center’s Alumni Lounge, overlooking Lake Mendota. Once again MEPP secured the best spot in town for a sunny-day commencement celebration! Family members left knowing just how genuine our appreciation has been for their support over the past two years.

- Brian Price was elected class speaker for the Commencement Brunch. With his usual combination of wit and perceptive insight, Brian painted a picture in words of the class’s two years climbing “Mount MEPP.” Brian described the role of each instructor and staff person in equipping, training and supporting the assault team.

- Very spiffy sport shirts and caps, with design and purchase coordinated by Darin Driessen. The class logo, designed by Darin’s mom, is shown at right.
Presenting the MEPP Class of 2003

Ronald Bachleitner         Polaris
Jeffrey Biddle              Dean Foods
Bryan Buerkle               John Deere
William Collier             Hamilton Sundstrand
Jennifer Culp               Pharmacia
Darin Driessen              Hamilton Sundstrand
Leah Frautschy              Genentech
John Freije                 Eli Lilly
Thomas Garrahy              AT&T Wireless Services
Robert Gauthier             Hamilton Sundstrand
Mark Goldsmith              Aventis Behring
Margaret Honaker            Kellogg Company
Ganesh Iyer                 Caterpillar Inc
Brent Johnson               Hamilton Sundstrand
John Johnson                GE Medical Systems

Jude Lai                    Hamilton Sundstrand
William Leden               Hamilton Sundstrand
Xing Li                     Hamilton Sundstrand
Marjorie Melton             City of St. Louis
Mark Peery                  AbleConn LLC
Joy Pirkel                  Eaton Cutler-Hammer
Brian Price                 Harley-Davidson Motor Co
Donald Ritter               United Defense
Giora Sat                   GE Medical Systems
Burt Schmidt                EST Company
James Spaulding             US Navy
William Stowe               City of Des Moines
Kathy Suchoknand            Boeing Commercial Airplanes
Nicholas Thompson           Cingular Wireless
Steven Wachtel              ARES Corporation
Feature: Follow-up Study of 2002 Graduates

By Greg Kearsley

One of the important evaluation questions about the MEPP program is whether it has lasting impact on those who complete it. In order to address this question we conduct a follow-up study approximately 6-9 months after graduation. We use a multi-level assessment method that involves sending out two similar surveys to graduates and their workplace associates (i.e., coworkers, managers, subordinates) and comparing the results. Both versions of the survey ask respondents to rate improvement in a variety of skill areas related to the courses taught in the program (e.g., “demonstrates good project management skills” or “uses financial analysis tools to solve business problems”) as well as more general professional development (e.g., “leads efforts to bring about change” or “works well in team situations”).

All of the 2002 graduates completing the survey (25 of the 29 graduates) indicated some or significant improvement in 12 of the 18 skill areas including: effective project management skills and accessing/organizing information. Overall there was a lot of agreement between the graduates and their workplace associates on skill improvements as a result of the program, although the graduates perceived a greater level of improvement than their coworkers.

Graduates were asked to describe the most significant changes to their workplace abilities and attitudes since beginning the MEPP program. The most commonly mentioned changes were: increased self-confidence and self-esteem, improved verbal and written communication skills, improved computer skills, better time management skills, familiarity with more decision-making tools, and better understanding of financial systems.

We also asked respondents to describe any professional or work-related accomplishments that they attributed primarily to their involvement in MEPP. These included:

- promotion to team leader
- increased recognition from manager(s) and colleagues
- completion of reports and presentations
- involvement in professional organization
- managing a remote team
- introduced new methods in company
- procured new projects for company
- still employed despite layoffs

Graduates were asked if they had received any promotions or salary increases that they attributed primarily to their involvement in MEPP. Ten respondents indicated that they had, and a few others mentioned other positive outcomes (awards, keeping their position).

Finally, we asked for other comments about the impact of MEPP on their career or life. These included:

- better overall understanding of business
- revitalized career
- enjoyment and satisfaction of learning
- sense of accomplishment
- renewed interest in learning
- better handling of stress and workload
- more career opportunities

In addition to the graduate and coworker surveys, we also asked graduates to have a family member complete a survey to get their perspectives. One item on this survey asked respondents to describe the impact of the program on their family. Responses included:

- program took away a lot of family time
- learned the meaning of quality time
- got to share graduate’s excitement and increased confidence
- increased stress
- good model for kids doing homework
- increased pride for graduate’s abilities
- got to see more of him since he studied at home
- had to work around class/study schedule

Based upon the results of the follow-up survey with the 2002 graduates, we can definitely say that completion of the MEPP program has a great impact on the graduates, as well as their coworkers and family. Incidentally, the results were very similar with the 2001 class – and we wouldn’t be too surprised if they matched those of all future graduates!

For anyone who wants more details about the surveys, contact Wayne Pferdehirt.
News and Announcements

Upcoming Open House Webinars — You’re Needed

MEPP has several Webconferencing sessions scheduled for prospective students to talk with faculty, staff, students and alumni. It’s a great opportunity to experience firsthand our Webconferencing tools, learn about the program’s objectives, and ask specific questions about what it’s like to be part of the MEPP program.

Here’s what’s on the schedule:

Monday, December 8, 2003, 12:00-1:15 PM Central Time
Tuesday, December 9, 2003, 7:00-8:15 PM Central Time
Monday, January 12, 2004, 7:00-8:15 AM Central Time
Tuesday, January 13, 2004, 7:00-8:15 PM Central Time
Friday, February 16, 2004, 12:00-1:15 PM Central Time
Friday, February 16, 2004, 7:00-8:15 PM Central Time
Tuesday, March 9, 2004, 9:00-10:15 AM Central Time
Wednesday, March 10, 2004, 7:00-8:15 PM Central Time

You can help us with these Webinars in a couple of ways. Please spread the word about these information sessions with interested colleagues and others in your organization. The sessions are free and registration is online and easy to do at http://mepp engr.wisc.edu.

We’re also looking for students and alumni who would like to participate in one or more sessions. Hearing about the program from your perspective is very important to potential students and they value the insights and experiences that only you can provide.

If you’re interested, please contact Tom Smith through MEPP Community or at smithtw@epd engr.wisc.edu

MEPP, the Next Generation

(Please let us know if we’ve missed anyone. Congratulations to all!)

Leah Frautschy (‘03), February, baby girl
Jeff Greulich (‘04), March, baby boy
Raymond Beffa (‘05), July, baby girl
Bob Van Zeeland (‘04), July, baby boy
Jack Boyer (‘04), August, grandson
Bob Microw (‘05), August, baby boy
Steven Schapel (‘05), November, baby girl
Bob Satori (‘04), coming Xmas eve?

Promotions/Job Changes

Jeff Biddle (‘03), accepted new position as Technical Operations Manager with Dreyer’s Grand Ice Cream, September 2003
Jack Boyer (‘04), promoted to Engineering Manager for John Deere manufacturing operations in Brazil, July 2003
James Knoll (‘04), promoted to Engine Applications Engineer for John Deere, October 2003

Bruce Wallin (‘02) selected as Associate Fellow in field of Dynamics, Hamilton Sundstrand, September 2003
James Miller (‘02), promoted to Systems Engineering Manager for Dayco Products Inc. in March 2003

MEPP Receives USDLA Award

MEPP added to its honors last April when the United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) awarded MEPP with its Distance Learning Excellence Award in the higher education category. The judges praised MEPP for its expertise in using multiple technologies to provide a high-quality educational experience to off-campus students.

Also at the USDLA April 2003 conference, Network Skills instructor Chere Campbell Gibson was inducted into the USDLA Hall of Fame.