

Episode 48: Career Opportunities in Engineering

The Michael Eure Show Podcast

INTRODUCTION: Hello, this is Michael Eure and I'd like to invite you to the Michael Eure Show featuring student hosts and very special guests talking about a variety of interesting topics. You can find us on the Eagle Stream YouTube Channel.

MICHAEL EURE: Good afternoon and welcome to the Michael Eure Show.

Today, we're very excited to be working with Career Services at Wake Tech and the celebration of National Career Development Month, and we have some very special guests and I'm going to ask you all to briefly introduce yourself and we'll start with Jerry.

Then we'll go to Sonya, and then we'll go to Chris.

This is quick. Thank you.

JERRY GREENE: My name is Jerry Greene. I'm a cyber security major here at Wake Tech and I've been working alongside Michael Eure here in these Eagle Streams.

SONYA HAYES: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Sonya Hayes. I'm a career coach with Wake Tech's Career Services.

DR. CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Good afternoon. Welcome everyone.

I'm very excited to be here today. Name is Chris O'Riordan-Adjah, department head for the engineering department here at Wake Tech.

EURE: Alright.

And that we're gonna ask Sarah to move us to the side, and we're gonna go through the student success Coach link.

And I just want to today get to let the audience know, particularly students that we want you to stop right here at resources because this is where we really direct students to these offices.

So, today I'm gonna ask Sarah, if you could just click on Career and Employment Resources.

And what it does, and then we're gonna, it'll come up to their page, but we wanna go to "schedule an online appointment."

This is just a sample, and this is what I think is quite important that people know that this particular office can help them determine a major or program of study.

This is a real function of this office, and we send students there for that all the time. Clarify career goal. They help with networking, job search, blah blah blah.

I just wanted you all to see and particularly students that have success coaches, that link is important not just because of the success coaches, but the other areas you could get to from that.

So, I'm finished, Sarah. So, thank you so much. And now I'm gonna turn it over to Jerry and let him start with some questions.

GREENE: I got a question for the both Ms. Hayes and Mr. Chris, I mean Dr. Chris. Sorry.

Alright. Please can you give us a little bit more details about yourself and what are things you enjoy and how did you get to the Raleigh Durham area?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Over to you, Sonya.

HAYES: Great question for sure, Jerry.

Of course, again, I am a career coach with Wake Tech's Career Services. In my department, I'll start there.

We are the department that assists you with developing the career plan. We help you discover that career pathway.

So, this is a very special month for us with it being national Career Development Month because the career development process is lifelong. So, we focus on life and learning and work over the course of your lifespan.

We all are on a journey of career development, so of course we help students discover those career choices, and we also help them really reflect on that career plan.

We do it year round, but national Career Development Month is when we really, really zone in and focus on those things.

We have tons of events, of course that will be hosting throughout the month and we'll share the link for those events a little bit later in the show.

But to answer your questions, things that I enjoy, I've always been a person who's just enjoyed helping others. I've known that since probably the age of four I've been, I've always shared, I love, I have a passion for people. I love supporting others.

I've worked with people of all walks of life. I've worked with homeless population, at-risk youth, I've worked in higher education, I've worked in disability services.

You can find me volunteering with the Special Olympics and many nonprofit organizations in the community. So, that passion within me reflects in everything I do.

I'm originally from the dirty south, as we say. I am from Albany, GA, so I'm sure you can hear my Southern drawl when I speak.

So, of course I had family, my sister lived in this area already. She had been here about seven years or so, and I will come visit her often and said, you know what?

I'm gonna try the Raleigh Durham area. Let me give this area try. So, that's how I ended up here.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Great. That was good, Sonya.

Every time I hear about journeys, and where people have been and where they are right now, I'm not even sure where to start with mine. But I like exactly what Sonya said about, you know, just connecting to people and liking people. So, I will start there. I must start with that.

My journey kind of halfway started in Florida where I was at University of Central Florida as a faculty. And that's where I actually made my connection with students.

Prior to that, I was, I was in industry. Still, I'm in industry, but as a consultant. But when I was in Florida, I was the advisor for the National Society of Black Engineers, NSBE. And that's where I made my most connection with students.

I thought my teaching career was just going to be teaching at night and going back home until I had this advising position and that really connected me to the students.

I left Florida and then went to Missouri on the same path of helping out students because that was actually my alma mater, back in Principia College in Illinois was where I went first as a student. It's a liberal institution, but it did have an engineering program.

And it started and it didn't start off right. So, I was probably one of the Guinea pigs, I went through the program. So, when the opportunity came up to really channel the program forward, I saw that as an opportunity.

And then went to help them to get on track and then left there. Headed down here to North Carolina for a couple of reasons.

One is I always I felt like so far as advanced or college universities go, I've done the big universities, I've done a small university and my wife who actually went to a community college, always brags about how great community colleges are going to be.

And she said if you're thinking about, you know, you're teaching career, you should definitely have community college on your resume.

And I said, sure, you know what a great opportunity it will be for me to get a community college experience. And that's actually one of the reasons we came down here, her work also transferred here.

We came down to North Carolina for spring break, very quickly, and we love the area.

This is of course, coming from Missouri. It makes North Carolina look very beautiful. So that was part of our plan here, and I'm very grateful to be part of Wake Tech's engineering program.

That was just a perfect fit for me and I'm hoping to continue on that same line with the helping students trying to engage students who are interested in engineering, and actually students on the whole.

One of my interesting things, and I'm actually doing right now on the same path of, you know, helping students, is actually starting a podcast that hopefully I'll get information to Michael to give to everyone, Let's talk, Ed with Professor Chris.

With the goal of making sure that the students college experience. It's an experience, so it becomes an experience, and not a survival.

So, I think I've said enough right now. So, Jerry, thanks for the question.

And then let's move right on.

EURE: I'm gonna interject here to say, I met you and we have been talking for quite a bit of time and I'm really glad that you brought up NESBE, because it's so very important and I have been involved with that as well and particularly the RTP chapter.

And I know that they want to start a chapter at Wake Tech, so I'm hoping that our students will have access to those scholarships. Those professional development opportunities and of course, it's not just for black students, it's for any student, it just has that in its name.

So, thank you. Your wife is an engineer too, isn't that correct?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Yes.

EURE: So, you got all that money. So, I'm gonna stop here, because...

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: I don't know about that.

GREENE: Alright, this next questions for Dr. Chris. Although you although your department's been relocated to the Division of Applied Engineering and Technologies, can you describe as best as you can the degrees offered in your area, and what should students expect in terms of classes, transfer options and employment opportunities in engineering and/or technology?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: So, I'm gonna start little bit back from the transition period because the engineering, the transfer engineering program actually used to be with the Math and Science Department division, and it was it was a good fit.

The reason was when the engineering program, by the way, started here at Wake Tech it's still very young because we're talking about 8-9 years ago since the program became official here at Wake Tech.

They were trying to find a place for it and they decided math and science would be the best place because the prerequisites for our program is within the math and sciences.

So, that's how it's been for the year since it started. But it's always been a discussion of given our students that option of the different sides of engineering. Well, in the applied engineering technology area, usually students come in thinking, well I want to do engineering and maybe what they really wants to do is hands-on and applied engineering.

So, we've always had a discussion of helping students out, know the difference between the engineering transfer program and applied engineering technology.

The good thing about that is usually the applied engineering technologies students, sometimes we get students that excel and that program, and then all of a sudden they changed their mind. They want to be transfer students.

So, they want to go to a four-year college, so if they send them over to our end and we do the same, we actually have students who I have a little bit of a challenge with our program and then will say. You know what, this is what I wanted to do. So, what are my options?

So, we've had this discussion back and forth as to you know what we should be probably working together. And so now we have this transition. We're all on the same division.

The programs within the division now, by the way, since engineering moved into the applied technology.

Now the new name for that unity is, uh, bioengineering, engineering, skills, trade and what am I missing here? The last T is a technology that applied technology. So, that is now the BEST, right?

So, we say the best program at Wake Tech right now is actually our program BEST.

And so when we're working on right now, students now can talk to advisers within the program and we are able to offer them all the different options. We still have the engineering transfer program, which means students that are interested in transferring after two years to the NC State, to the A&T, the ECU, those are all different options and I will touch on that here in a second, but that is a transfer program.

So as far as applied engineering technology goes, we have the bio engineering, and we have a whole lot of applied engineering technology.

We can talk about the welding, we talk about architectural, we'll talk about the civil.

So, the best way really, since there's a lot of them, is for students that are interested, to just go on the website and if you go on the website, we are all at the same place now. So, you have to go jumping around looking at different places.

But for the transfer program which I heard, I do want to kind of emphasize one of the challenges we have with our students that are interested in our program to transfer usually we get caught up with, oh I want to go to NC State, right, and everybody wants to go to NC State and the requirements are so high.

And I stress this, very, very importantly is because we happen to be this close to NC State, but the programs NC State has the competitors are A&T, ECU, especially A&T it's way up there in terms of the programs they have. You talk about the mechanical engineering which is one of the areas students wanna go to in terms of going to NC State. It's very, very strong as well at A&T.

Alright, so, we have that and we have ECU, fortunately Campbell is also part of the schools that we work with, but it's a private school, right?

So, we have to talk about some expenses, but I do wanna put that out there that if it's student is interesting a transfer program, they should not be caught up in, this is the only option that I have.

EURE: Alright. And I want chime in, and if Sarah wants to, she can put your programs up and students can see them, but she can certainly put them in chat.

So, this is your applied engineering technologies, and she can scroll down, and people can just see the different majors, I think. But she's gonna put this in the chat.

Associate in engineering, that's you. Applied engineering and design and all of those.

And I also want to emphasize, I went to visit the building J on the Northern Wake Campus, and I knew this, but they had great big posters of the transfer options for those applied engineering majors, and I think that's important too.

And the last thing I was saying before we let Sarah bring, what not Sarah, before we let Sonya talk about a great giveaway... is that North Carolina A&T, North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University is the number one public HBCU in the nation. And they are the number one producer of African American engineers in the nation.

So, it is not at all a second-rate school.

I think that people like Chris said, they're very committed to NC State, but UNC-Charlotte, A&T, East Carolina, all these options are available and once you get the degree, you're gonna get the job and your career will move forward.

So, thank you, Sarah.

And I'll turn to Sonya, very quickly.

HAYES: That was, uh, so much information that Dr. Chris has already provided just in that first question.

But what I wanna do at this time, of course, today we are looking at our career development. So, I wanna challenge all the students who are with us today to engage with us.

You have Dr. Chris right here as a professional, so I want you all to use this opportunity to gain insights into the field, but use the chat box, definitely to ask some questions because we have a cool giveaway for today as well.

So, definitely use this as an opportunity to start exploring careers and help you with that process of career development.

EURE: And I also would ask Sarah if she could put the career development month activities in the chat and students you couldn't use it to register for events throughout the month.

Alright, I'm sorry, Jerry. It's your chance.

GREENE: Alright. Our next question for Dr. Chris, what advice would you give to someone who thinks they may be interested in a career in engineering or related fields or but they're unaware that that's differences relating to engineering and engineering technology?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: So, I do you want to start off with the different opportunities, right?

I think I'm at a point here in my life where sometimes when I tell students there's, the thing is either too good to be true or they don't really trust what I'm saying.

And the reason I'm saying this is, you know, we talk about engineering and unfortunately the first thing people think about is the money aspect, right?

It's like, oh, engineers make money, and so for that reason alone, I'm gonna do what it takes, you know, to do it. So, I can make that money.

I'm not saying that you should not do that.

I'm at the point in my life where I feel just like myself and students, you really to find your passion, and what it is that you want to do.

Because engineering is the last thing you wanna be doing, if you're not happy about doing it. It's stressful enough, right?

So, you have to bring in some type of joy in order to really enjoy what you're doing. And trust me, to pay back would be great.

So, I say that as students are also picking professions, not only I didn't think in engineering, but students also come into engineering and maybe they're strong area is mechanical engineering or civil engineering, but because they know their friends, or they've heard about computer engineers making more money, than they think that is probably where I should be going. No, that is no way you're gonna go.

Pick your lane. Pick your track, because here's the thing that people also forget, I'll use civil engineers as an example, which is my area. In civil engineering, and my wife is an electrical engineer, so, very, very great examples. In civil engineering, for example, we are the very, very, we are the very, very bottom, so far as starting pay goes.

But don't let that fool you. Alright, very clearly, they're both engineering. You can go on Google right now. Entry level pay is probably gonna be about \$50,000.

Everything else, all the other engineers, they probably start at \$55,000, \$60,000, right? But here is the thing with civil engineering. We are also one of the only engineering professions that requires professional license. Which means that our field, you could track out very quickly and also at a point become [indecipherable] manager because you do have the license and now let's talk about who is making money at this point here, right?

My wife is an electrical engineer, and they start a very, very strong and they stayed there for a very very very very long time.

While we progress through, so usually I like to educate students on this here as an awareness also to kind of emphasize the fact that, pick your passion, don't let the money be the ultimate goal.

Students have also asked me, well, you're doing engineering, how did you decide to be here? How did you decide to do this teaching thing, right?

And of course, the reason they asking that question is again money. And I say you will be surprised how much money some professors in research make.

Some will probably make more than engineers make as well, so don't let money be the defining factor. Pick your passion, and everything else that you do, do it very well and it will pay.

That being said, when students come into engineering, I'm talking about engineering versus applied engineering... there are some that love to do engineering, would like to do engineering and transfer to transfer to get the engineering degree.

However, math and physics are probably one of the big catches, right?

It's okay, and you get students saying I really wanted to do engineering.

I didn't realize I had to do this much math. But yeah, so this is where the applied engineering comes in, because if your math is not strong enough, but you're very good, hands-on putting things together, there is still a place for you.

Okay. I went through the process of becoming an engineer and my parents still today, my dad rest in peace, but my mom is still alive. And if anything breaks down in our household who does she call? Me. Forgetting that I was the transfer engineering student. I [indecipherable] and I don't know how to fix a VCR. Jerry, do you know what a VCR is?

Alright, so this is.... I always use this example because that is one track that students can go into, actually, one of my cousins who went through a technical route, he's the fixer.

He's the one that does everything and now I wish actually had some of that knowledge. So, I value both areas.

One person is not better than the other.

The applied engineering group gets certifications as well and they become project managers in their own field.

And let's not talk about how much money they are making in that area as well.

Alright, so for students in terms of trying to decide, usually I try to rule out the whole money thing.

Come talk to me. Let's first find your passion and put you on the right track.

EURE: Alright, we have a question in the chat and we have to do that.

Go ahead, Jerry. It's from Lexi True.

GREENE: Lexi True says; hello all, can you give a few practical example of the differences between the engineering career in applied engineering/technology career?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Perfect.

Okay, so, I think I eluded that to that a little bit.

Advantages, let me start of advantages on both ends.

When you finish, let's say you wanna transfer you go to your four-year institution, you get your degree. When you go that route. Usually yes, you're working with a big company that's already established, right? So, they're gonna pay you what you wanna pay you.

You're gonna go through the process, they'll give your raises, and you're gonna keep going in that direction. That's great.

Okay, it gets to a point where sometimes you're thinking about independency. You're thinking about; you want to do stuff for myself.

That is the downside of the track that I went through, and most engineers will going through because it's very, very challenging on that track to start something on your own.

If you go through applied engineering technology, your chances of being independent, or starting something on your own... is much, much greater because you're probably going to be working with a company that is looking for apprenticeship, really.

They just want to train you because they are also not big enough. We're talking about people with welding experience, people with carpentry experience.

People that could do, fix cars, right?

People want you to be on your own in that area. You can diversify and do that. That is one of the big advantages.

And again, you know people think oh, just by going to a four-year institution and getting your engineering degree, you are all set. No, you're not all set.

Right, you still working for someone. They both have the advantages and disadvantage, so that is one of the key examples is you go to the applied technology area, you actually get certifications, and you get to have your own your own business, right?

And that is, to me, some point that is very, very important, that is, that is key.

Gets to control your own money, your own time, and everything else that comes with it.

EURE: I'm always chiming in, but I have a lot of students that think they wanna be computer science majors, for example. Or computer engineering.

But when they learn about our associate of applied science degrees in IT, that's really where they wanna be, for example.

And I had a student before the pandemic. They graduated in cybersecurity.

They started off making \$60,000 plus, and the company they're working for was paying for them to go to a four-year school. And I think the big misconception is the only way you can transfer is to be in particular programs.

And I think we have to do a better job as a school to emphasize many of the associate of applied science degrees do transfer. And the other good thing is after two years you could be making money and if you really want to make money and you need to make money quickly, maybe there should be a lot more consideration to those tracks.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Michael, you could not have said it any better and you know, let's go back again to it's very, very important and I'm actually happy Sonya is here as well, Career Services because that is one of our biggest challenges, right?

We want students to come in and say, okay, this is where you want to do this for you wanna do how can we help you do what you want to do?

Career Services has a program that can help you determine that, right? They could test your math skills, they can test, your English skills, to kind of see where you fit in. Especially if you wanna go into the engineering technical field areas.

I think it's great and I do wanna... this is where, you know, I put in a plug for Wake Tech and the other community colleges that actually have this option.

Because most of the institutions that I've been in, believe it or not, for our engineering students who find out, you know what? That's not what I want to do.

Guess what their options are?

Fortunately, you know, we joke about this here. When I was studying University of Central Florida, all three engineering buildings stood there and the next building next to it was the business building.

Whether it was by design, I don't know about when our students decide it cannot do engineering, what they end up? In business and nothing against business because I cannot do any accounting, so I commend them for going in there.

There is not that much option.

Here at Wake Tech, but most of those engineers, students by the way, if there was that option of doing something like an applied engineering, they would probably go there as well because this, as students will tell you, I can take anything apart and I can put it together, right?

How many times have we had that I can fix anything in my house when it breaks down, right?

So, these are people that are very good and will excel in applied engineering programs.

So, here is an option for them there at Wake Tech.

EURE: Okay, I guess now we're gonna ask Sonya to chime in a little bit about the things that you've heard Chris say and what you encounter in Career Services.

HAYES: Dr. Chris, you were right on it.

Where sometimes, umm, when students are in a situation where they've discovered that engineering might not be exactly what they thought it would be, they're really quick to jump to a major that they're not really sure about.

They don't have all the information on. So, this is where I wanna put emphasis on the fact that in Career Services we can really support you in developing a plan that's tailored to you.

So, when we think about our career plan, this isn't just some cookie cutter.

We really get to know who you are by measuring your work interests. We measure your skills; we measure your work values.

We talk about those things that are part of who you are as a unique person so that we can help you assess what is the next track or you've discovered that engineering is exactly what you want. So, we need to explore the different areas of engineering.

Engineering is a very broad field, as Dr. Chris has already shared; You can go from civil engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering.

There are so many different options out there that you want to allow us to help you discover the path that's best for you. And Dr. Chris has already shared that he doesn't mind assisting you as well, so we may need to tag on some informational interviews where they learn about those paths by hearing from professionals such as yourself so they can really discover which path is best for them.

So, I definitely want to encourage you before you go over to the business building, as Dr. Chris has said, it happens often... you wanna stop by Career Services.

We have our one-on-one appointments. We have our career lens lab. You can meet with us virtual. You can meet with us in person. So, you definitely have the option. So, take advantage of the support.

EURE: Okay. I think we can go to the side and take another little break and then we'll come back.

And Sarah, you can do the last link you were sent from the mixer.

And we just do a quick little entertainment break because I know some of you have to leave at 12:30.

But we're gonna continue as though this is a class and stay until 12:50.

Thank you, Sarah.

Yes, we're giving you from the African American Latino Mixer, which was held June the 30th, but the Michael Eure Show, work with student activities and I have really enjoyed this.

So, this [indecipherable.]

[music playing]

EURE: Alright, thank you, Sarah. It's always good to get a little entertainment break.

So, we're going to continue with some questions.

Jerry, do we have any? Or not.

I think you just said it's for both Mr., I mean Dr. Chris and Ms. Sonya Hayes?

How can students or others interested or other interested individuals get in touch with each of you?

We can start with, uh...

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Sonya, you go ahead.

HAYES: Well, of course, as my email address is right there for you.

So, you can definitely reach out to me through email.

You have my email address there so you can send me an email.

We can talk about the plan, of course, can share with you how to schedule appointments.

So, I'm looking forward to hearing from each of you, and of course today removes any barriers there. So, now you know Career Services. You know what we do.

You can definitely reach out to me and also to schedule an appointment with us if you go to careers.waketech.edu, you can schedule an appointment there.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: And for myself, that's my email address on there. You can email me, I will field questions.

We also have, again, a lot of information on our website that you go to for our engineering students specifically and this is what we use for engineering students that are already part of our program, should have given this to Sarah. But it's STEM, stem@waketech.edu, not to be confused with the STEM center, this is just STEM at waketech.edu.

If you send an email to that link, one of our faculty members, there it is, one of our faculty members will get back to you and schedule an advising as well.

So, these are the two ways, and if you want to talk to me, even when you use this email address, just specify... just say in the email I need to talk to Dr. Chris and the faculty member will let me know.

EURE: Alright, thank you.

And we also have another question in the chat.

Lexi True says it's a is it possible, profitable, meaningful to get an engineering degree now and then later decide to branch out into an applied technology career.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Okay, so that sounds just like me.

So, now that I'm actually part of the applied engineering technology, I'm looking at all these fancy programs.

They have the architecture and I'm actually gonna use architecture as an example.

Uh, different things that it do, interior decoration. You know, we're paying people to come to a house to give us ideas. I'm like I can, I can be creative. I can learn how to do this, but yes you could do that.

Remember, when we're talking about the differences and the passion again, ultimately it comes down to the passion, right?

People will say that the engineering path is most challenging, but that's if that's what you're passionate about, then go for it. Right? Don't let anything get in your way. Go for it. Do it.

The applied engineering technology, you could always come back to it. They are certificate programs. That's one thing I like about the applied engineering programs as well.

They are certificate programs and even though I joke about it, I'm seriously thinking about looking at the architectural program to see if I can get some certification because I'm out of point right now where you know, what else can I do on the side here?

Especially since I'm not fully involved with my structural engineering, where I designed bridges. And that's the other thing too. If you wanna continue designing bridges or high rises like commercial office buildings or designing, this means is you have to be part of a bigger company to do that. Independently, I cannot design any bridge.

No government is gonna give me any money for me to design a bridge.

That's just the way it is, right? So, fortunate right now, since I'm consulting, I don't do any major projects. I just do miscellaneous projects which will be sign structures like there's a sign that needs to go up on a highway. Little stuff like that I could, you know, check and design.

So, answer to that question is yes, you always get your degree if you want to get into that. Applied, you can always do that with some certifications later on.

EURE: Alright, and an associates of applied science degree that has certifications in it, I think that people can get confused and I think these are degrees and they are.

And also about architecture, I do want you to know my brother is an architectural engineer and I think you met him, Dr. Chris. He graduated from North Carolina A&T.

But I think Sonya has a question for you.

HAYES: Dr. Chris, as you were talking about, uh, designing bridges and some other things you've done, of course as an engineer, sometimes we hear about these cool projects.

Do you mind sharing with us at least one project that you've done you?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Absolutely.

So, before I even do that, I'm going to share a very quick story.

When I went back to Florida from industry, by the way, my transition was very slowly. I went there really out of default because I love my alma mater. UCF is where I got my graduate degree and I still kept in touch with them because it also happened to be in Central Florida, where most of the engineering companies work.

So, usually when you're looking for interns, you know, they go straight to UCF.

Well, when I was working, I chose the second company that I was working for, who are looking for interns.

And so, I quickly got in touch with the civil engineering department at Florida, UCF and I said, can you send somebody out here?

You know, we need some interns and my boss, who actually happened to be from our rival school, which was a Gator, Florida University, said no, we we're gonna get interns from Florida University and North Central Florida.

So, we had this big argument. Of course, I cannot argue with him, he's my boss, but I asked him very nicely. I said, why is it that we are this close to my alma mater, but when we're looking for interns, we cross all the way to Gainesville, which is two hours away from where we are to get interns.

And he said, well, I'll be very honest with you, the program at UCF when it comes to the CAD drawing, which is really the software that you're supposed to use for drawing or to do any design, uh, they don't teach it that well.

And I said that was a good point. That was a constructive criticism, right?

So, I went straight to the Dean of Civil Engineering and I said, hey, this is what we need to work on. So, our students to get internship?

Well, guess what, he told me to come help him do that.

And so that's how I got into being an adjunct. And when I went there, Sonya at a question you asked is the same question as students asked me the first time I walked into the classroom.

So, tell us about the projects that I've been working on? At that point I've been in that company for five years and there was no project that I've worked on or designed that has been built.

And people are surprised because it takes anywhere from 15 years from when a bridge is designed for it to be built to almost 20 years.

So, the ones in the company that had the pictures of bridges in their office, they've been there almost 40 years and probably have like two or three bridges in their office.

And then make sure to blow it up and fills up the whole office because that is how long it takes.

Fortunatate for me, one, actually two of the bridges that I worked on, were actually built two years ago and this is me being 12 years removed from the company.

But one of those bridges actually is in Orlando and is one of the fly overs to the Orlando International Airport.

So, my inlaws are there when the family and I go out there to visit.

Guess what I do? We have to drive over that bridge so I can let them know that I was part of this design on that bridge.

The other one is actually on the I-95 highway, going to Miami, also down South and that's because really that's kind of, Florida's where I got my bridge design experience from.

So, two bridges are the only bridges out of my 15 plus years that engineering that I can actually put my name on, but I hope this this kind of gives you an idea.

Yes, but uh, those are the two, yeah.

EURE: Okay. So, we have a few comments and I'm gonna ask a question, Chris, about your classroom instruction. Even though I know you're in administrator, but you teach every now and then.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Yes.

EURE: Did you teach at other schools as well?

And what's the difference that you find between Wake Tech and some of those other schools?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Very good question.

So, I have taught at all three institutions that I've been at, currently. I started off back in Florida, again in south Florida. I was an adjunct and I started with the engineering mechanics class.

Well, actually let me backtrack. I told you how the Dean got me into helping with the CAD drawing, so I started off helping the seniors that we're getting ready to graduate, with their senior design projects, that's actually how I started.

So, I was really, we were working on a project as part of their senior design project and we will go through, this is what you have to do to build a bridge. This is what you have to do to build a building. So, we go through all the process of doing that.

So, that's how I started and then I got into, really like you to teach. Have you really thought about teaching?

Of course. I've had that comment many, many a times when I was a graduate student. Students would always come to me after I helped them with their homework, you know, have you thought about teaching? Could you do teaching?

I'm like, why would I do teaching when I'm, I wanna get an engineering degree to make all that money? You want me to come and teach, right?

So, little did I know, fast forward 10 years prior to that, that is what I was gonna be doing, and I love doing it. Like I said I had a connection, you know, with the students.

So, I went on to teach engineering mechanics, and then I taught some advanced engineering courses. [indecipherable] analysis one and two, mechanics of materials, and those where all courses within the civil engineering that I taught.

What I transferred over to Illinois, I was told teaching those classes I will teach the EGR 220 which is in engineering mechanics which is also the very first course. All the engineering students are required to take and which we use a lot in civil engineering, by the way, because those are the basics we use.

So, I taught that and then here at Wake Tech, believe it or not, I wasn't planning on teaching here.

I told him when I applied for this position, I requested a teaching and they said well, you wait till you see how much work you have to do as a department head and then you tell us if you still wanna teach.

Well, after my first semester I go; No, thank you.

That's... I'm not gonna be able to do it. Well, last year because of Covid, one of our faculty members wasn't able to teach her class, so I jumped into it to teach it. It was amazing.

But to tell you how passionate I am about teaching, I couldn't do any work.

I focused all my energy on my students and my class, and I will get emails from my boss saying, have we finished this assessment? Have you finished that? And I'll go, no, I am teaching.

So, obviously I cannot do them both, but if I have to pick I definitely will go back into the classroom anytime.

EURE: Okay, well this has been very good. We're not ending it yet. I'm just finding it interesting.

Not that you are, and I'm working on the committee with you that you're working with the associate of applied science and engineering. Do you feel like there will be, and I'm hoping that Career Services will be a big part of this, that we will be able to get students on the right track? And people that know we know I always say students don't do well because they're in the wrong major.

And if we start them in the right major, then as I understand it, Sonya you can correct, Career Services can work with students from the moment they're admitted. So, why aren't we putting that step where it needs to be? And then the students will be in the right major from the beginning. Their advisers wouldn't have to go back and try to fix something because they'll come to them saying I want to be in the AE program and really want to be in the AE transfer program. Or they'll say I want to be in electronics engineering technology or electrical engineering technology, whichever it is, and they'll be the right track.

So, do you think that that's gonna be a big change? Now that they put them together, it seems like that's gonna really help a lot of students.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Absolutely. So, Michael, and I'm sure, probably Sonya, is also aware of this here, but we're having a lot of discussion on, you know, how did our students get this far in your program and yet so lost in the program, right?

That's kind of, I think, where we are, for lack of better terms is, you know, what we're facing currently with our students.

So, we decided we need to go back to the drawing board here and just see what will be some of the best practices and the best approaches and, you know, thanks to Michael who, you know, during this discussion, I was just suggesting, well, this what we need to do this, what we need to do. And he says, you know, we already have the resources to do that?

Career Services is the place, you know, they will, they actually do very well in placing students. So, you know, we pulled in Career Services, we pulled in Academic Advising, and now we have all these units working together to make sure that when students come in, you know, what are the best steps.

We're talking about it during orientation, we need to have maybe a very specialized orientation for the students that are interested in being in engineering.

And I think very inclusive, even in other sciences, right? To start there, let's have an orientation to see where, you know, the student's interest are during the process? Let's get Career Services in as well. You know, what can you all do with those students?

Academic Advising is working on getting making sure they get the student's transcript that they can very well interpret what they see on the transcript to see how best they can actually place the students as well.

If we could get all our students that come in the very first semester to go talk to an advisor, to go to Career Services, to take our easier EGR-150 class, these are the three things that I think will put our students on track.

I absolutely trust that if we can get those three, that it is going very well. We should be, we should be good.

So, that's kind of where we are, right now, and I hope we keep going on that path.

EURE: And I think it's great that we can do these innovative things and we don't have to reinvent the wheel. We just need to switch where people place things.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Yes.

EURE: Career Services needs to be in the beginning, not the end.

People think, oh, I need a job, I'm gonna go to Career Services, but no, go to them from the beginning.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Right.

EURE: And many people need a job in the beginning, so I'm really a promoter of your department, Sonya, because you've helped so many students and every student I have forwarded over there, or walked over to Career Lens Lab... they are so thankful.

Wish I knew it.

So, there's no reason what some people say, but it's all on the website. But they don't know what they're looking for on the website, so it doesn't matter if it's there. We need to kind of let them know.

And right now, Sarah.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Sonya, you see how Michael is promoting your program and not mine?

EURE: Well Chris, you know program promoted in the title of the show, Careers in Engineering and Technology, and we're gonna have you back.

HAYES: I definitely wanna chime in here.

We also serve prospective students so we serve prospective, currently enrolled and alumni.

So, we are able to work with students regardless of where they are in life, regardless of how long it's been since they graduated.

So, they have that ongoing support and we definitely appreciate the support and all of the referrals.

But one thing that I was hearing when you were talking Dr. Chris, is teamwork makes the dream work.

We say it all the time, so just as you and Michael were both sharing, it takes all of us. We are the village, of course we always talk about Reach 'N Rally, but it's true it takes the effort of each one of us for the student to really get on that right path, be able to follow that path to what's next for them. And to really be able to then transition into the careers that they're wanting.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: You could not have said it any better, Sonya. During our last meeting, I brought it up and I said I'm very impressed, in all my two years that I've been here.

I know, you know, you hear it all the time. If you need this, go to this person. If you need this, go to this person. But maybe I didn't know how, but this is the very first effort that I made outside my division to get different groups together and it's worked amazing, you know. Like I said, we got Advising, and we got Career Services that AET group right now, you know, we got a representative desk. Well, and it's just been one great, great team.

I think our team should be asked to put the strategic plan together and then we should be able to do that right, Michael?

EURE: no, we gonna let you, Kevin, and Laura and Davis Smith do all that.

But I do enjoy being on it and I think it's a good us of success coaches because we navigate students to the resources, and students different things.

So, I think working this orientation or information session in the beginning, we can have the students more prepared when they start the first day of class.

But we've come to an end just about. I mean we, time goes by.

So, I'm gonna ask Sarah, if you could do a couple of the comments and then we're gonna have everybody make a final comment.

Laura Bethea, how you doing?

GREENE: Laura Bethea says, good afternoon, everyone. Happy National Career Development Month.

EURE: Thanks, Laura. Laura, and way to represent Career Services, Sonya.

Laura is, I let you do that one, Jerry.

GREENE: She says awareness of the various training programs is key. We have some solid options in North Carolina to consider.

EURE: Kevin Brown, associate vice president. Go ahead.

GREENE: Great conversation. Thanks to all the panelists.

EURE: Laura Bethea, again.

GREENE: Bethea also says, loving the dialogue. Thanks Dr. Chris and Sonya.

EURE: Lexi True.

GREENE: She says, agree. Thank you to all the panelists.

EURE: Thank you and thank all of you for participating.

And I'm thinking now, Sonya, do you want to just kind of give out that special gift?

HAYES: Yes, we definitely have a special gift and I think I've already been able to identify who the winner is.

Of course, that's right. Dr. Chris says it's me.

So, of course, with it being National Career Development Month, we definitely highlighted an amazing career, the career of engineering.

But I wanna before I do the gift card giveaway, again, put emphasis on the different activities that we have this month to assist you with the career development process.

Of course, we have more career panels, we have more sessions. We have virtual tours, so come join us.

We're gonna have a virtual tour of Nassau and Amazon, and Amazon is actually tailored to the future engineer. So, definitely want to invite you all to that.

We also have our art and poetry contest that's going on throughout the month, and we also have an amazing podcast.

One of our career coaches, Mr. Larry Tucker, does a podcast each month, and this month he's gonna be focusing on the future of work. So, definitely join us throughout the month.

You all know how to get in contact with me, but also know how to schedule an appointment. The team is waiting for you.

Now for the moment we've all been waiting for... we have a gift card giveaway and Lexi True, the gift card goes to you.

So, we are proud of you. You chimed in quite a bit throughout this entire session, so we appreciate the engaging conversation, and the questions.

So, if you will, Lexi, if you will for me place my email address there. So, that way, Lexi, you'll know exactly how to reach out to me.

So, I want you to send me an email right now, Lexi, because I want to get this gift card to you. And it is a \$50 gift card, that's all yours. So, congratulations.

EURE: Congratulations, and make sure to use your Wake Tech email address, Lexi.

HAYES: Yes. Please, please use that.

EURE: Alright. So, thank you all.

And next, the 17th, we'll have careers in science, and it's gonna be the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences.

So, volunteer opportunities and oh, Lexi, Lexi, lots of lots of comments.

So, now we're gonna close it out with some closing comments and we're gonna start with Jerry, and we're gonna do Sonya, and then we're gonna do Dr. Chris.

GREENE: I don't have a lot to say, but I'll refer back to what Dr. Chris said earlier.

Have a passion, have an awareness of what you wanna do in college, especially like regarding your major. Because I know when I first came to Wake Tech I had majored in engineering, but I switched to cybersecurity because I didn't like math, of course.

But have like a passion for what you wanna do. I think that's really important.

HAYES: Well, Jerry, you just said the magic words right there. I don't know what else I can say.

Having that passion is very important. I'm definitely a believer and you want to enjoy what it is you're doing. You want to have that desire to go to work.

It starts with identifying your interest, so definitely allow Career Services to support you. You have an amazing team, as you see right here at Wake Tech. You've already heard Dr. Chris being willing to help guide you.

You know that Michael Eure is an amazing success coach.

So, you have the village waiting for you, so, allow us to support you.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: And I'm gonna close with this.

And this is not because I'm at Wake Tech, but Wake Tech has the best options I have ever seen or accounted in all the institutions that I've been at. And I've been to a few.

I actually had institutions that I had interpolation agreements with back in Illinois, all the way down to North Dakota, all the way.

So, they are when I say institutions, I have seen and studied a lot. The opportunities and resources that Wake Tech provides is beyond any of those institutions.

So, please, please, please take advantage of those and if not then please follow your passion.

Thank you.

EURE: And this is the end of our show, and we'll see you again on the 17th for our next collaboration with Career Services and the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences.

Bye.