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**FOR**  
**YEARS**



# **Biomedical Engineering**



# Darwin Ramirez Alvarez

## Degrees

BS in BME ('21)

MS in BME ('24)

## Current Residence

Olive Branch, MS

## Current Employer

University of Memphis

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

The Department of Biomedical Engineering played a significant role in my decision to attend Herff College of Engineering. As someone deeply interested in the intersection of healthcare and technology, I was drawn to the opportunities offered by a strong biomedical engineering program. Herff stood out not only for its academic reputation but also because it was the only accredited biomedical engineering program close to my home. This proximity made it an ideal choice, allowing me to pursue a high-quality education without having to relocate far from my family and community. The accessibility of the program gave me the chance to stay connected to my support system while immersing myself in a field I'm passionate about. Herff's commitment to innovation, research opportunities, and hands-on learning further affirmed my decision to enroll and shape my future in biomedical engineering.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff College of Engineering prepared me for my career by equipping me with the fundamental skills and knowledge essential for success in the job industry. Through a rigorous and well-rounded curriculum, I gained a solid foundation in engineering principles, problem-solving, and technical analysis. Courses in biomedical instrumentation, biomechanics, and systems physiology gave me both theoretical understanding and practical experience that directly apply to real-world challenges. Additionally, the emphasis on hands-on learning, team projects, and laboratory work helped me develop collaboration, communication, and critical thinking skills—traits that are highly valued in any professional setting. Herff also provided access to internships, research opportunities, and mentorship from experienced faculty, which gave me insight into industry expectations and helped me build a network within the biomedical field. Overall, Herff played a pivotal role in shaping my professional confidence and competence as I transitioned into the workforce.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Throughout the Biomedical Engineering program at Herff College of Engineering, I acquired a variety of practical and technical skills that have been especially valuable in my career. In particular, I developed a strong foundation in laboratory techniques essential for biomedical research and development. I gained hands-on experience in cell culturing, where I learned how to properly handle biological samples, maintain sterile environments, and monitor cell growth—critical skills for any role involving tissue engineering, regenerative medicine, or pharmaceutical testing. I also became proficient in lab maintenance, which involved organizing lab equipment, ensuring proper calibration of instruments, managing inventory, and adhering to safety protocols. These practices instilled in me a sense of responsibility, precision, and professionalism that I carry with me in any work environment. In addition, I honed my data analysis skills using tools such as MATLAB, Excel, and statistical software to interpret experimental results, identify trends, and draw meaningful conclusions. This ability to analyze and communicate complex data clearly has proven essential in both research and industry roles. Together, these skills prepared me to confidently contribute in fast-paced biomedical and clinical settings.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

My most impactful professor was Dr. Fujiwara, who played a pivotal role in shaping my academic and professional path. During my undergraduate studies in the Chemistry Department, she was the one who first introduced me to the world of research. Her mentorship went far beyond the classroom—she took the time to guide me through the fundamentals of scientific investigation, helped me develop critical lab skills, and encouraged me to ask deeper questions about the work we were doing. Dr. Fujiwara believed in my potential early on, even when I was still unsure of my direction. She opened the door to research opportunities that not only expanded my technical knowledge but also sparked my curiosity and passion for discovery. Her support and guidance were key factors in my decision to pursue a higher degree. She showed me what it means to be a dedicated researcher and inspired me to push myself academically and professionally. I will always be grateful for her encouragement and the lasting impact she had on my journey.



**[Read the full Q&A!](#)**



# Amy de Jongh Curry

## Degrees

BS in EECE ('92)  
MS in EECE ('93)  
PhD in BME ('97)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

University of Memphis

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I was awarded a scholarship that made attending the Herff College of Engineering very affordable.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

I had the opportunity to work in a Herff research lab as an undergraduate, which propelled me to pursue graduate studies and ultimately led to my career in academics and research.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

I learned that critical thinking and good communication are just as important as the technical knowledge and skills in engineering.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

My research advisor was most impactful as a teacher and mentor.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Society of Women Engineers, Tau Beta Pi

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

Herff has an environment that promotes meaningful interaction and collaboration. I had wonderful support from my peers and faculty alike. It was easy to find study groups, and faculty were accessible.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

I remember discovering that I loved coding when I was an undergraduate and working in a Herff research lab. This research experience motivated me to pursue graduate studies and a career in academia and research.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Herff is a place where you can learn, get involved, and make an impact during your college journey. Herff is a place where you can be part of a community working to improve the world around us. Herff is a place where you can create your future.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I remember being very glad to have finished my last class for my last degree. However, I soon recognized that engineering requires continuous learning, writing, and testing, just like my class

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Yes. Herff faculty and staff always demonstrate that they are invested in students and helping them reach their career goals.



# Steven Go

## Degrees

BS in BME ('24)

MS in BME ('25)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

Grace Medical, Inc.

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

The Herff College of Engineering was the best decision for opportunity and inclusion of everything I was interested in.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

The Herff College of Engineering continuously prepares me for my career by giving me networking opportunities and ways for me to improve professionally.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Some skills that I learned throughout the program that was most helpful for my career was the group work involved in engineering projects and how to problem solve as a team.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

I had many impactful professors but Dr. Pendley was one of the most interesting in that he challenged us to apply our knowledge of medical physiology in practice.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Tau beta Pi, BMES/SFB, SWE

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I had the support of my friends and family and stayed focused by managing my time out correctly.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

The greatest memory was the finish line of graduating. It was hard work, but the final day was a big celebration.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Work hard and enjoy your time here because it only happens once.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

How fast time flies. I should have savored the moment more rather than wanting it to be done. I miss those times alot.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

There was no price. I was on scholarship. If I could do it over again I would have been more decisive and less undecided about what I wanted to do with my career.





# Samantha Hall

## Degrees

BS in BME ('23)  
MS in BME ('24)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

The University of Memphis

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I decided to attend the Herff College based on undergraduate research and scholarship opportunities.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

I was able to participate in undergraduate research, which influenced my pursuit of a PhD in biomedical engineering.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

My most impactful professor was Dr. Joel Bumgardner. Dr. Bumgardner fostered my interest in biomedical research, presented me with numerous opportunities to engage with and learn about the field, and encouraged me to pursue graduate studies.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I have been involved in the Biomedical Engineering Society/Society for Biomaterials, the Society of Women Engineers, the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation, and Alpha Eta Mu Beta.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

My greatest memory from the Herff College of Engineering is the time that I spent conducting undergraduate research.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

I would advise prospective students to consider the numerous opportunities that the Herff College provides and how they can contribute to your individual success.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Yes, I greatly appreciate my time at the Herff College and would choose my experience a second time.





# Paola Jimenez

## Degrees

BS in BME ('18)

MS in BME ('21)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

Smith + Nephew

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

Scholarships offered for merit students.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

The challenging nature and number of classes contributed to my growth and learning experience.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

The opportunity to think critically and solve challenging problems has been invaluable to me. Specifically, my graduate work, which focused on computer simulation, has been especially important for my career.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. John Williams. He had a profound influence on my academic and professional journey due to his deep expertise, passion for biomechanics, and unwavering support. Dr. Williams challenged me to think critically, pushed me to expand my research skills, and always encouraged intellectual curiosity. His mentorship not only helped me excel academically but also inspired me to pursue a career in biomechanics. The combination of his rigorous teaching style and genuine investment in my growth made him the most impactful professor in my education. I am very thankful that Herff has professors that invest in and challenge their students.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Yes. Alpha Eta Mu Beta Biomedical Engineering Honors Society (AEMB) and Society of Women Engineers (SWE).

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

The support of my immediate family and financial scholarships from Herff were crucial to my journey. As an international student, I was highly motivated by the opportunity to better myself in a different country, made possible by the financial assistance I received specially during my graduate school education.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

Making good friends and being able to study together in the EA 3rd floor area until late at night.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Engineering is challenging, but it's also deeply rewarding to solve problems that haven't been solved yet and to make a positive impact on society. It's essential to have a strong support network around you during tough times. When taking classes, don't hesitate to ask questions or go to office hours. Teachers are very approachable and full of knowledge—they're there to help you succeed.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

As an undergraduate, you have plenty of time to learn and refine your skills. Make the most of this period by building a strong engineering foundation and sharpen your technical abilities by taking advantage of a variety of classes offered. This will set you up for success when you begin your first job.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

I would have taken more advantage of internship opportunities offered by different companies at career fairs.



# Hunter King

## Degrees

BS in BME ('15)  
PhD in BME ('21)

## Current Residence

Seattle, WA

## Current Employer

University of Washington

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

As a Tennessee native, my decision to attend the Herff College of Engineering was heavily influenced by my desire to receive a top-notch engineering education close to home. The University of Memphis offered exactly what I was looking for: a robust in-state program with strong emphasis on innovation and practical knowledge application in engineering fields, particularly in biomedical engineering.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff College of Engineering played a pivotal role in preparing me for my career by instilling critical thinking skills that are essential for both engineering and medicine. The curriculum emphasized active learning and honed my ability to analyze complex problems—a skill that is invaluable in my radiology residency where precise diagnostic skills and innovative problem-solving are crucial. The environment at Herff also encouraged the development of study skills and career preparation, enabling me to navigate and adapt to the evolving demands of my dual role as an engineer and physician.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

First and foremost, the program honed my critical thinking skills. I learned to approach problems methodically, questioning assumptions and evaluating solutions rigorously. Another invaluable skill I gained was the ability to work effectively in teams. In both the engineering and medical fields, collaboration is key. Lastly, the relentless problem-solving mindset developed during my doctoral training has been crucial. Engineering challenges often demand persistence and creativity, traits that are directly transferable to clinical problem-solving in medicine.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. Gary Bowlin, who serves as a Professor and Herbert Herff Chair of Excellence at the University of Memphis, profoundly influenced my academic and professional development. His extensive experience in clinically relevant translational research resonated deeply with my aspirations of bridging the gap between engineering and medicine.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I was involved with the Helen Hardin Honors Program during undergrad.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

During my college journey, the support of my family played an indispensable role in helping me stay focused and motivated through undergraduate studies. As I progressed to graduate school for my PhD in biomedical engineering and subsequently pursued my MD, the unwavering support of my wife became crucial.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

My greatest memory is undoubtedly the moments shared with my fellow graduate students, Ben and Allison. Together, we navigated both the highs and lows of an intense and rewarding PhD program in biomedical engineering. The camaraderie and mutual support among us created an invaluable network, turning challenges into opportunities for growth and success.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

For those considering enrolling in the Herff College of Engineering, my advice is to fully embrace the extensive research and experiential learning opportunities available. Herff College stands out with its commitment to providing students with hands-on experience and real-world applications of engineering principles.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I wish I had known the magnitude and impact of the advancements in medical imaging research that would soon be coming to the department.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Reflecting on my journey through the Herff College of Engineering, I can confidently say that the experience was absolutely worth the investment. The education and training I received were instrumental in propelling my career forward, particularly as I navigate my radiology residency training alongside my medical degree. The faculty's commitment to research and academic excellence provided me with invaluable skills and knowledge that continue to serve me well in my professional endeavors. If given the chance to do it all over again, I wouldn't change a thing. The opportunities for hands-on experience and innovation, coupled with being in an environment that valued diversity and collaboration, made my time at Herff College incredibly fulfilling and formative. I am proud to have been part of a program that not only met but exceeded my expectations for an engineering education.





# Evan Main

## Degrees

MS in BME ('22)

PhD in BME (in progress)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

St. Jude

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

My love for Memphis and the impressive expertise and skillsets that the faculty at Herff College of Engineering possess led me to attend the Herff College of Engineering. I was and am still so excited for the opportunity to receive hands on training from widely renowned experts in the field of Biomedical Engineering.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

The Herff College of Engineering has supported my growth as a graduate student and researcher by providing access and exposure to industry and institutional collaborations, guest speakers from across the world and from various disciplines, and the support to attend conferences to present my research and gain insight and inspiration from other researchers.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

I've learned to think critically, set and accomplish goals for myself, and to use obstacles as an opportunity for growth and to build character both as a person and as a researcher.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. Gary Bowlin's personal, professional, and scientific mentorship have been invaluable to me and I could not be where I am today without him. He has given me the balance of both hands-on direction and the space to develop and grow as an independent student and researcher.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I currently serve as the president of the Biomedical Engineering Honor Society, Alpha Eta Mu Beta, and am a member of the Biomedical Engineering Society (BMES).

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

My colleagues in the lab, the amazing friends I have made along the way, and my cat, Phillip. I stay focused on the goal by reminding myself that I do this because of a love of learning and a desire to constantly grow and improve.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

The 2022 Biannual International Society for Applied Cardiovascular Biology (ISACB) meeting hosted by the University of Memphis brought new friends, inspiration for new research, and lots of fond memories.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Embrace the challenge, be flexible to change and grow, and hold on to your passion for learning.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

Don't be afraid of failure. It is part of the process, especially in research. Learn from your mistakes and allow them to guide you toward success. Fail forward!

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Absolutely. I would get more involved in the Herff Community earlier on.



# Solomon Mesfin

## Degrees

BS in BME('22)

MS in BME ('23)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

Medtronic

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I've always had a strong interest in engineering because I enjoy problem-solving and building innovative solutions. Studying engineering is a way for me to turn this passion into a career. I was particularly drawn to the Herff College of Engineering at the University of Memphis because of its strong reputation, experienced faculty, and the resources it provides, like state-of-the-art labs and research opportunities. I knew this would be the ideal place to develop my skills. Being in Memphis also offers unique advantages, from access to local engineering industries to a community of peers and mentors who are dedicated to making a difference.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

The Herff College of Engineering provided hands-on learning through its advanced labs and project-based courses, which helped me develop practical skills essential for biomedical engineering. By the time I graduated, I had developed technical expertise and critical problem-solving skills, which prepared me to tackle complex challenges in biomedical engineering and make a difference in healthcare technology.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Throughout the program, I developed strong technical skills in areas like biomechanics, bioinstrumentation, and medical imaging. Learning to analyze and interpret complex biological data became a cornerstone of my work, allowing me to develop effective solutions for medical applications. I also gained proficiency in tools like MATLAB and SolidWorks, along with other modeling and simulation software. These tools have been indispensable for designing and testing biomedical devices, helping me bring concepts to life in a safe and efficient way.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

My most impactful professor was undoubtedly Professor Amy Curry. As a transfer student and a non-native English speaker, I faced challenges not only academically but also in adjusting to a new environment without the support of close relatives. Professor Curry made everything seem easier, helping me feel welcomed and supported so I could fully concentrate on my studies. She provided insight on what to expect in my courses, shared advice for navigating college life, and encouraged me both academically and personally. Beyond the curriculum, she offered guidance that helped me grow as a person, helping me bridge cultural differences and adapt to the new environment. Her mentorship and genuine kindness made a profound difference, allowing me to have the best college experience possible. I'm truly grateful for the impact she had on my life and career.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

ABM program and BMS

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

During my time in college, I relied on a combination of academic and personal support. Professor Amy Curry was incredibly influential, offering both academic guidance and personal encouragement that helped me adjust and stay motivated. My classmates were also a vital support system, especially during group projects where we could share ideas and help each other through challenges. To stay focused on my goals, I set clear milestones for myself, breaking down my long-term objectives into manageable steps. I reminded myself of the bigger picture that how each assignment, exam, or project was part of building the career I wanted. Staying connected with my support network kept me motivated and grounded, especially during stressful times. This combination of personal determination and strong support from my community played a huge role in helping me stay on track and succeed.



**[Read the full Q&A!](#)**



# Duong Thuy Nguyen

## Degrees

BS in BME ('08)  
MS in BME ('10)  
PhD in BME ('13)

## Current Residence

Hamburg, Germany

## Current Employer

Bluu Seafood GmbH

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

My parents wanted me to stay close to home so U of M was my top choice. Also, the guidance I received during those years increased my commitment to my biomedical engineering degree.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

My education and experience at Herff College of Engineering served as the foundation of my adulthood. I learned many valuable lessons and met long lasting friends. My engineering courses challenged my learning capacity by improving my problem solving skills. The diversity of topics from mechanical to electrical and biomedical engineering gave me a great introduction to all the possibilities of a career. In addition, extracurricular activities that Herff hosted such as summer programs for girls in engineering and engineering day open house gave me opportunities to inspire engineering careers to the younger generation. This experience was something that shaped my focus to become a leader who wants to inspire and teach.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

In my biomedical engineering program, there was a big focus on tissue engineering and biomaterials, this paved the way for my career. I still apply some of this base knowledge to my current job even after so many years.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. Joel Bumgardner had the most impact in the journey I have travelled. He was the person who sparked my interest in tissue engineering. Hence, I became his master thesis student to work on a tissue engineering research project. He gave me great guidance to get my National Science Foundation Fellowship and how I should proceed to my PhD adventures.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I was very active with the Society for Women Engineers because I found it was a great network of supporters. Society for Biomaterials and Biomedical Engineering Society were other groups I was part of to learn and expand my career possibilities.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I received financial support from Herff and also guidance from the college counsellor Ms Atkinson about course planning. The whole Biomedical Engineering Department from graduate students to the faculty was very supportive throughout my time there especially when I was able to work as one of the office helpers.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

This would be between finishing the senior design assignment with a great group of friends or seeing cells grow on the scaffolds I created on the scanning electron microscope.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Go outside your comfort zone and be actively involved in the department and in student groups. The size of the college is just right to get a diversity of possibilities while still being small enough for you to have a voice if you wanted to make an impact in your own career or as an outreach.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I wished there were opportunities to learn about entrepreneurship because I have been working in three different start-ups until now and that would have helped me excel even more.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Considering that I had a full ride to Herff due to the scholarships provided, I would consider it was worth the price. I would not have done anything different. I really enjoyed the being able to approach any of the professors, not getting lost in a large building, and seeing up close innovative research. Herff College of Engineering had the environment that fostered my transition from being a high school student to a career driven adult.



# Allison Fetz Palazola

## Degrees

BS in BME ('16)

MS in BME ('18)

PhD in BME ('21)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

Medtronic

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I was looking for a high quality, affordable education at a medium-sized university where I could connect with my professors and my peers. I was very impressed with how welcoming the faculty, staff, and students were when I visited the Herff College of Engineering – and I could not say no to the incredible scholarships and fellowships offered by the college and university.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff prepared me for my career by giving me access to courses, resources, and experiences that let me discover what I loved most about Biomedical Engineering. Through these diverse interactions, Herff helped me build skills integral for a successful career, including critical thinking, problem solving, communication, leadership, and a passion for lifelong learning.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Although I am only in the early stages of my career, I have found that a passion for lifelong learning has been the most beneficial skill for me so far. Being a PhD can often mean that one is hyper focused on a very particular knowledge area. While I do have very specific knowledge from my PhD, I never lost sight of wanting to learn about other technologies. Having a desire to continue learning throughout life has opened many doors and let me traverse various therapeutic and technical areas in my career, including immunology, orthopedics, and most recently, spinal technologies. Herff encouraged this exploration and helped me hone in on my skill for lifelong learning.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. Gary Bowlin was my most impactful professor because he welcomed me into his Tissue Template Engineering and Regeneration Lab and let me discover what I love most about Biomedical Engineering – research and the clinical application of biomedical technologies. Dr. Bowlin mentored me through my entire research experience at Herff from an eager and inexperienced sophomore to a still eager, although slightly more tired, and confident researcher with a PhD. Dr. Bowlin's support helped me flourish during my time at Herff and continue to flourish now in the early stages of my career.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Kappa Delta Sorority, Frosh Camp, Engineering Student Council, Engineering Ambassador, Alpha Eta Mu Beta, and Tau Beta Pi

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

My greatest support during college came from my family and friends. Because they were understanding and encouraging, it was easy to stay focused on the goal of making the most of my education through prioritization and time management.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

My greatest memory from my time at Herff was my hooding ceremony for completing my PhD during commencement on the field of the Liberty Bowl Stadium. After 9 years as a Memphis Tiger – 4 as an undergraduate and 5 as a graduate student – and finishing graduate school during the challenges of a global pandemic, it was a bittersweet moment of reflection and celebration for everything I had accomplished and everything yet to come.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

The return on your investment during your time at Herff is directly proportional to what you chose to put into the experience. If you want to make the most of your education, get plugged in, and you will find that the opportunities are limitless.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

You will never feel fully prepared for the first job after graduating, or the second, or the third. However, trust that your engineering knowledge and the skills you developed will help you learn what you need on the job to be successful.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Absolutely! Walking away with 3 degrees and an incredible experience debt free is one of the best choices I have ever made.



# Jenny Pallme

## Degrees

MS in BME ('14)

PhD in BME ('18)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

Stryker

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I was attracted to the wide variety of disciplines within the BME program. I received an email from Dr. Lindner (the professor who would become my PhD advisor) requesting a phone call to discuss research opportunities and we connected instantly. The knowledge and passion he had for his research was evident and I knew that he would be an advisor who could guide me in becoming a good researcher and a knowledgeable scientist in my future career.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

My education and experience at the university gave me confidence to raise my voice with ideas, challenges, and opportunities, which allows me to be a critical team player in my career today. I am able to explain projects and problems in a way others can understand as this was an essential skill when conducting and presenting research at the graduate level. Additionally, my graduate education improved my communication, presentation, and documentation skills. I suppose when you're trained to document every single step you take in the research lab, it sets you up nicely to be a good note taker.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

I learned how to think critically and creatively to tackle challenges. Additionally, I learned the importance of working as a team and leveraging strengths and skillsets from other researchers.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

I'm going to cheat and provide two. I consider myself extremely lucky to have had the opportunity to work under Dr. Erno Lindner and Dr. Bradford Pendley. These two are extremely successful and knowledgeable mentors who guided me not only in my academic career but also helped me navigate life in a new city. They never hesitated to answer my questions and offer sage advice. They were invested in me as a person, and it made my time at the university an incredibly meaningful experience that truly shaped me into the person I am today. I still keep in touch with them!

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

President of Alpha Eta Mu Beta, University of Memphis Chapter (2017-2018)

Member of Alpha Eta Mu Beta

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I had an incredibly supportive lab group. Not only did we share a lab together, but we shared coffee and lunch breaks together and would often discuss our experiments or ideas during this time. Shout out to Dr. Brad Hambly, Dr. Marcin Guzinski, and Dr. Jim Atherton! I hope to have coffee with them again sometime soon! Additionally, my family has always been a huge supporter of my goals. While they lived far away, they were constant cheerleaders and were thrilled to celebrate my successes! I was able to maintain focus knowing I had this supportive community alongside me.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

After completing my MS in 2014, I received a scholarship to conduct research at Abo Akademi in Abo, Finland. I spent four months learning from top researchers in my field and exploring Finland and Sweden in my spare time.

In 2017, I had the incredible opportunity to travel to Hungary to attend Matrafured, an international conference focusing on chemical sensors, which was the emphasis of my PhD. I traveled with my entire lab group. What made this trip truly special is that my PhD advisor, Dr. Erno Lindner, is from Hungary so he was able to give us all a special tour of his home country. The opportunities presented to me during my time at the University of Memphis were unique and absolutely incredible. I know that these opportunities would not have been possible had I studied elsewhere. I truly felt like I had the chance to learn, grow, and advance because of the collaboration and network I found at the university.



**[Read the full Q&A!](#)**





# Steven Peckham

## Degrees

MS in BME ('95)  
PhD in BME ('00)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

S M Peckham Consulting LLC

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

When I enrolled, the graduate Biomedical Engineering program was just getting started. It was an exciting opportunity to be part of something new and to play a small part in a growing academic area.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

The program provided a solid foundation in both technical and problem-solving skills, preparing me for the challenges of a fast-paced industry. There was a great mix of learning self-reliance in some areas, and the need for peer support in others. I was fortunate to have both academic and collaborative industry projects to develop my ability to work across disciplines—a skill I use daily.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Throughout my career, I have often worked in areas where there were no established procedures or precedent on which to rely. Forging new development or regulatory paths is an exciting challenge. Learning how to approach complex problems and adapt quickly to new challenges in my graduate research was invaluable.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. Steven Slack was a great mentor and friend. He was an inspiring teacher and research advisor. Dr. Slack challenged me to deeply understand research outcomes rather than just reporting results. He was not my primary advisor, but I would not have completed my PhD without his guidance.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I was a member of BMES, but most of my peer interaction came through the more informal daily engagement with our lab team.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I was fortunate to have fellowship support to offset the financial side. Through those long years, my wife Elizabeth was a constant source of encouragement. Connie Hall was a PhD student at the same time, and her friendship and guidance were instrumental to my success. I think having a close group of peers with common goals helped keep us all focused.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

One of my greatest memories was when the university hosted the Biomedical Engineering Society annual fall meeting on campus. It was a great opportunity to see the students, faculty, and administration all work together to put on a first class meeting and showcase the emerging BME program.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Take full advantage of the resources and opportunities available to you, especially research and networking. The program equips you with more than just technical skills—it teaches you how to think critically and innovate.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I wish I had understood the importance of networking and building relationships beyond your core research team early on. The connections you make during your studies can have a lasting impact on your career.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

My experience at the University of Memphis was absolutely worth the investment. It was a tremendous time of learning and growth, both personal and professional. If I could do it over again, I would hope to view the experience as more than a means to an end. I would more greatly value and appreciate the opportunity while in the middle of it rather than in reflection.



## Ron Perrone Jr.

### Degrees

BS in BME ('15)  
MS in BME ('17)  
PhD in BME ('22)

### Current Residence

Memphis, TN

### Current Employer

Medtronic Spine and  
Biologics

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

My college career followed a slightly different path than what was typical for most individuals straight out of high school. I did not attend college right after high school and was looking to make a later in life career change, with the intent of getting involved in the world of medical devices. To make this a realization, a college education was the ticket I needed to make that change, which could then secure a financially stable future in an exciting career that was more than just a means to an end. However, I was a 34-year-old happily married father of three small children, solidly rooted in Memphis and was limited with respect to college choices by location, not to mention by budget as well. As a father of three small children, it was important that I attained a degree as quickly as I could so I was available to work as soon as I could if needed. I started my college career at Southwest Community College where I secured my first degree, an Associates of Science, which had a University Parallel program through a partnership with the University of Memphis that assured all credits would transfer so long as I finished the associate's degree. Luck was on my side as the pursuit of the bachelor's degree took me to The University of Memphis via the partnership with Southwest Community College, considering the University was directly located right in the middle of one of the world's largest hubs for the medical device industry. My intent was to attend The University of Memphis until I attained the bachelor's degree, then hit the road running in pursuit of that industry gig. Little did I know the bachelor's degree was just the beginning of my experience at The University of Memphis, which turned into a 10-year long journey in the pursuit of educational excellence, which resulted in a few publications, a Master of Science degree and what I thought was an unattainable goal in my life, a PhD. All of this was made possible because of the recognition by the faculty members at The University of Memphis to foster the drive I had, which allowed me to reach my highest potential; one that I didn't even know was there.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Memphis is a hub for some of the most innovative and influential biomedical device companies in the world. The Biomedical Engineering Department in the Herff College of Engineering at the University of Memphis and joint program with the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, has established partnerships with these giants in the biomedical device industry, which provides a symbiotic relationship where the colleges can tailor their curriculum to teach the most current, relevant skills that are in high demand by today's industry. This provided the excellent opportunity to learn the latest, necessary skills required to thrive in today's industry and presented a unique opportunity to get directly involved with these companies through internship opportunities, mentorship programs and other opportunities that allowed me to build a network directly with individuals who worked within the industry. The Biomedical Engineering Program at the University of Memphis checked all the boxes to provide an excellent education that gave me the necessary tools I needed to be competitive in today's high-tech biomedical device industry and I proudly represent the University of Memphis as an engineer at one of the world's most well-known medical device companies, right here in Memphis. I work along several University of Memphis Alumni who are actively engineering solutions to restore health to individuals in need.



**[Read the full Q&A!](#)**



# Jada Sandridge

## Degrees

BS in BME ('23)

MS in BME ('24)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

University of Memphis

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

The strong sense of community emphasized by previous students influenced my decision to attend Herff College of Engineering at the University of Memphis. The availability of scholarships also made pursuing my degree more accessible, allowing me to concentrate on my academic goals without financial worries. However, what ultimately sealed my decision was my desire to be part of a larger, supportive environment where I could grow academically and personally. I was attracted to the idea of being in an institution where I would be more than just a number while still benefiting from the resources of a well-established college. The college's reputation for fostering a nurturing atmosphere, combined with its strong academic standing, reassured me that I would receive personalized attention and mentorship from faculty who genuinely care about the success of their students.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff prepared me for my career by giving me access to courses, resources, and experiences that let me discover what I loved most about Biomedical Engineering. Through these diverse interactions, Herff helped me build skills integral for a successful career, including critical thinking, problem solving, communication, leadership, and a passion for lifelong learning.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

During my college experience, I developed strong problem-solving and communication skills. For instance, my research experience taught me how to systematically and creatively navigate complex problems. I also learned to communicate effectively, conveying intricate ideas to diverse audiences. Additionally, I realized the importance of being detail-oriented and flexible, which has equipped me to approach challenges confidently.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

My most impactful professor was Dr. Gary Bowlin, my principal investigator (PI). Working in his Tissue Engineering and Regeneration Lab opened my eyes to new opportunities and fueled my interest for cardiology. He nurtured my curiosity and actively supported my career aspirations, providing invaluable guidance on both academic and professional fronts. When challenges arose, his patience and wisdom helped me navigate them effectively. Dr. Bowlin encouraged me to think critically, consistently taking time to discuss my ideas, and offering constructive feedback that refined my research skills. His unwavering support was instrumental in helping me achieve several academic milestones, including publishing my work and presenting at various conferences. His belief in my potential and genuine investment in my success profoundly shaped my academic journey and future career.

I also want to acknowledge Isaiah Surbrook and Kenneth Hoggan, who have significantly impacted my life. Isaiah's special topics course equipped me with essential college skills and imparted valuable real-life lessons, such as budgeting and networking. While Kenneth is not a professor, he introduced me to the world of research, supported me during challenging times, and taught me many crucial life skills. These individuals have provided me with the tools and knowledge that will undoubtedly influence my future!



**[Read the full Q&A!](#)**



# Julia Strecker

## Degrees

BS in BME ('22)

MS in BME ('23)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

Smith and Nephew

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I was an out of state student from St. Louis, MO. I didn't have many in-state school options that offered Biomedical Engineering as a major and the ones that did were not offering a lot of student aid. I expanded my search to out-of-state schools with BME programs that would offer me student aid. Memphis was the first of several schools that I toured. After my very first visit with Herff, I was impressed by the BME program, the Engineering Living Learning Community (ELLC), and the Accelerated Bachelors to Masters (ABM) program. When I toured other schools after that, I kept finding myself comparing them to the University of Memphis and their engineering schools to Herff. When I received my acceptance, I was offered significant scholarship money from both the university and Herff and that sealed the deal.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff did an excellent job helping me prepare for my career. Looking back, the senior design class very closely resembles the work I do in my job just in a more condensed time period. The group work and problem-solving process mirrors a lot of similar activities needed as a Research and Development Engineer. It definitely set me up with a lot of skills needed that I would have otherwise learned on the job.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Aside from the core classes that helped give me general knowledge needed in industry, the senior design class helped me to learn the product development process from beginning to end. I learned how to do CAD modeling with NX, learned how to 3D print, how to follow the prototyping process, and more. My time in a research lab helped me learn to problem solve independently and how to come up with solutions to problems that don't have a clear answer. In addition, the Herff Career Fair allowed me to network and work on my elevator pitch with local companies involved in the medical device industry and land interviews with several of those companies.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

My most impactful professor was Dr. Joel D Bumgardner. He welcomed me into his research lab as a Junior and supported my curiosity for research as an undergraduate student and kept me in the lab through my graduate year to complete my master's project. He is an incredibly supportive person who will also push you to do your best while still encouraging you to get out of your comfort zone. Dr. Bumgardner helped me become both a better student and better researcher. We frequently talked about my career goals for after graduation and discussed classes and opportunities to help me prepare to reach those goals. I am extremely appreciative of the time I had in his lab.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Yes, I was extremely involved throughout my time at Herff. Society of Women Engineers (SWE), Biomedical Engineering Society (BMES), Biomedical Engineering Honors Society- Alpha Eta Mu Beta (AEMB) as Treasurer my Junior year and President my Senior year, and the Engineering Honors Society- Tau Beta Pi as Vice President my Senior year.



**[Read the full Q&A!](#)**



# Jermiah Tate

## Degrees

MS in BME ('24)  
PhD in BME (in progress)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

J. Amber Jennings, PhD  
Biomaterials Research  
Laboratory

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

My decision to attend Herff College of Engineering was influenced by the high-level, resourceful research experience I always dreamed of experiencing in my hometown. The Herff College of Engineering includes the most supportive and knowledgeable faculty and staff members. The members are committed to service, research, and development.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff prepared me for my career by exposing me to several conferences, internships, networking events, and entrepreneurial programs. I know that my next stop is filled with a supportive team. I am glad to receive ongoing advice and leadership from the department.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

The skills and knowledge that I learned throughout the program that I found most useful in my career is the importance of problem-solving, organization, professionalism, and discipline.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

My most impactful professor is Dr. J. Amber Jennings. Dr. Jennings continues to serve as my professor and Principal Investigator. She is my most impactful professor because she honors her job and the students. She looks out for our well-being and success at all times. I really enjoy working with Dr. Jennings!

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Yes, I was involved in student groups. The Chess Club was the first club I joined at the University of Memphis. I was appointed to create the club sweatshirt designs. I was also involved with the Biomedical Engineering Society (BMES) in which I presented at conferences and developed activities for students K-12 to complete on The Herff College of Engineering Day.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

My PI, committee members, professors, peers, and family never left my side. I kept focus on my goal because I had no other option. People say, "You could have given up or changed fields." Engineers use what we know to develop solutions to a problem. Giving up means to stop being an engineer. If I stop being an engineer, I help no one. I solve zero problems. I am aware of my purpose. I live for staying focused on the goal.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

My greatest memory from my time at Herff was entering the lab at 3am to finish two electrospun membranes at a reasonable time in the evening; however, I ended up leaving around 10pm.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

The advice I would give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering is to understand the importance of Environmental, Health, and Safety before working alone.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I know now that time management is important for my health.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

My Herff experience was worth all the blood, sweat, and tears. If I could do it over again, I would become more involved in BMES.





# Carlos Wells

## Degrees

BS in BME ('15)  
MS in BME ('17)  
PhD in BME ('21)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

Department of Defense -  
Defense Health Agency

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

The diverse student population, scholarship opportunities, degree options, Herff College prestige and reputation, ability to learn from and collaborate with industry professionals, the location, and the closeness of the community and with the community.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff prepared me with translatable skills that allowed me to thrive in and adapt to any environment. Herff presented real life applications/situations while having the support necessary to overcome any challenges that were present.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Necessity of collaboration, how to lead, participate in, and navigate any type of team and an ability to work with individuals from a multitude of backgrounds individually and concurrently. The ability to apply and translate skills in real world applications.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Drs. Amy DeJongh Curry and J. Amber Jennings because of their character and transparency about all aspects of the academic journey. They were forthcoming with opportunities within Herff, around the University, and in industry that they had knowledge of. They were extremely accessible to students and have continued to be supportive, if needed, after graduation.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Golden Key Honour Society, Adult Commuter Services, Alpha Eta Mu Beta, Omicron Delta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi, Sigma Alpha Pi, Society for Biomaterials, Society of Women Engineers, Tennessee Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation, Biomaterials Application of Memphis, Biomedical Engineering Society, Society for Biomaterials, Tau Beta Pi, National Society of Black Engineers, Helen Hardin Honors Program

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I had the support of my professors, student peers, student groups, and mentors. I kept focused on the goal because of some peer groups that were formed early in my academic career in addition to personal ambitions.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

My greatest memory from my time at Herff revolves around a project I participated in for an individual living with a disability. The joy that the individual experienced and displayed when we delivered the finished product is one of the primary reasons I chose Biomedical Engineering. I do not know that I would have gotten this experience anywhere other than Herff.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Herff provides you with vast opportunities to participate in something that includes your passion. There are times when you have to assimilate due availability of options however, Herff has made tremendous efforts in addressing these gaps and closing them. There is always work to be done and I believe, based on my experiences, that Herff will make every effort possible once they are made aware of any persistent gap. Herff provides you opportunities to step outside of your comfort zone, address any known or perceived weaknesses, and engage with individuals from all backgrounds while treating everyone with respect and dignity.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I was extremely fortunate during my tenure at Herff. My experience was exceptional due to my peers, peer group, opportunities, professors, and the administration. I was provided relevant guidance, advice, and knowledge during my tenure that is still relevant now. There are no none instances where I can say I wish they informed me of this or I wish I had known that.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

My Herff experience was, without any doubt, worth the price. If I could do it over again there is nothing that would be done differently.

The image features a large construction crane in the foreground, its silhouette clearly visible against a dark blue sky. In the background, a city skyline with various skyscrapers is visible, also in silhouette. The overall color palette is a monochromatic blue, giving it a professional and industrial feel. The text is overlaid in the lower-left quadrant in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

# **Civil, Construction and Environmental Engineering**



# Andrew Assadollahi

## Degrees

MS in Civil ('10)  
PhD in Civil ('13)

## Current Residence

Southaven, MS

## Current Employer

Christian Brothers University

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

When I was applying to graduate schools, I was met with a warm and professional welcome by the Herff College of Engineering. Also, I was offered a competitive assistantship to fund my graduate studies.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

During both my master's degree and Ph.D., I was able to take ownership of my research projects; but also had many opportunities to teach and mentor undergraduate students. This helped mold my interest in becoming a faculty member who focuses on undergraduate engineering education. After having the opportunity to be a TA for Statics, Mechanics of Materials Lab, Structural Analysis 1 and 2, Intermediate Steel Design, and Soil Mechanics Lab; I knew I wanted to become a professor at a primarily undergraduate institution.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

I learned many skills during my time at the Herff College of Engineering. Most notably, my advisor Dr. Chuck Camp instilled in me critical thinking skills, attention to detail, and how to be an effective and compassionate professor. He taught me to always ask "Why?" and to go deeper into whatever I was exploring. Additionally, having the opportunity to take courses from Dr. Shahram Pezeshk, Dr. Bill Segui, Dr. Roger Meier, Dr. David Arellano, and Dr. Stephanie Ivey showed me the kind of professor I wanted to become.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

I had several professors who had a profound impact on my time at the Herff College of Engineering and my future trajectory. Most notably, though, are Dr. Chuck Camp and Dr. Bill Segui. Dr. Camp was my advisor for both my master's degree and Ph.D. and taught me in two courses. Dr. Camp invested immense time and energy into my success. Without him, I would not have become the professor I am today. I took three courses from Dr. Segui, who is the best professor I ever had in a classroom setting. His ability to convey information to students was unparalleled. When I teach courses now, I often ask myself "How would Dr. Segui explain this?"

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

No.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

My support system included my family, classmates, and professors. As the time went on and I began to realize that I wanted to eventually be a faculty member, I focused on the completion of my Ph.D. to attain that goal.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

My greatest memory was working with my advisor on my research.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Focus on your goals and reach out to faculty to help you attain those goals.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

The importance of grant writing.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Yes, it was worth it, and I would do it all again.





# Christie Assadollahi

## Degrees

MS in Civil ('19)  
PhD in Civil ('23)

## Current Residence

Southaven, MS

## Current Employer

Fowler Engineering

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I wanted to pursue a terminal degree in my field, but also live close to friends and family.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Attending HCoE as a graduate student prepared me for my career by challenging me in numerous ways. I worked as a teaching assistant and instructor of record most semesters, enrolled full-time in graduate courses, and I was engaged in research. Additionally, I was involved in student organizations that typically required travel during the academic year. As you can imagine, I was constantly shifting gears. As challenging as my time in graduate school was, I found it enjoyable.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

The ability to teach myself new concepts is really helpful as a practicing engineer. All of your clients and projects have unique needs, and the building codes and standards change as well.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. Pezeshk had the greatest impact on my graduate school career. As my Co-Advisor for my Master's Degree and Advisor for my PhD, we worked together a lot. He has always been calm under pressure, and teaches his students to be as well. He kept us on-task, but also knows how to have fun. He would always tell the graduate students if there was an event with free food nearby, which we all appreciated.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I was involved with EERI and SSA, both of which gave me the opportunity to travel, present my research, and attend lectures.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

My mom has always been my #1 fan and greatest supporter. She has her high school diploma and general contractor's license. She has always wanted my brother and I to go to college, and me attending graduate school was the cherry on top for her. She attended both my Master Thesis and Dissertation Defenses, and even travelled with me to research sites for my Master's Degree. She would take me out to lunch multiple times a week. Her constant encouragement kept me going when the work was tough.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

I loved attending lectures and meetings hosted by EERI. My favorite Annual Meeting was hosted in San Francisco, and we were able to see the Golden Gate Bridge, learn about earthquake reconnaissance, and tour Alcatraz all within one week. We had a wonderful time.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

I often say to myself "Challenging work is good for me." Keep this mindset throughout your college years and beyond.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

Time passes by really quickly.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Fortunately, I was able to attend HCoE with an assistantship and fellowship, so I did not have to pay for my graduate school experience. I wouldn't change a thing.



# Jerry Collins Jr.

## Degrees

BS in Civil ('75)  
MS in Civil ('76)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

Previous CEO of MLGW

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I received a Herff scholarship upon graduating from high school.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

I greatly value the instruction I received in my area of concentration, which is/was Environmental Engineering. I was really prepared to achieve my goals in the professional world upon graduation.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

I received a strong education regarding potable water treatment and distribution, as well as wastewater collection and treatment. In addition the Engineering Economics class gave me a unique perspective on how to manage design/construction/operation finances. I was also given opportunities as a student to verbally present complex engineering concepts to sophisticated professional engineering audiences.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. John Smith in the Civil Engineering Department was my most impactful professor while I was a student in the Herff College of Engineering. From 1973 through 1976 he really inspired and motivated me to learn as much as I could about Environmental Engineering.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I was involved with the student chapter of ASCE. Our ASCE Steel Sewers intramural sports teams were dominant.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

The financial support provided by the Herff Academic Scholarship really took pressure off of me so that I could focus on my studies. I was lucky to be surrounded by other high achieving engineering students. They lifted me up. They were an example for me to follow. The Civil Engineering faculty really took the time to get to know their students and they motivated their students.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

I spent many rewarding hours in the Civil Engineering Environmental Lab. Who would have thought that learning could be so much fun!?

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

I would advise students new to the Herff College of Engineering to get a taste of as many engineering majors and specialties as possible so that they will have the best chance to find a niche that they really love.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I wish that I had known that calculus and differential equations are not used very often in the professional engineering world. A strong math background is important, but algebra, geometry and trigonometry really served me well.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

My education at the U of M in the Herff College of Engineering was an unbelievable bargain! My \$250 per semester scholarship covered my tuition and books, and I usually had about \$10 left over.





# Kyle Doudrick

## Degrees

BS in Civil ('06)  
MS in Civil ('08)

## Current Residence

South Bend, IN

## Current Employer

The University of Notre  
Dame

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

My decision to attend the University of Memphis, and specifically enroll in Civil Engineering at Herff, was largely influenced by location and conversations with my brother, who was already a Civil Engineering student there. I grew up in the Memphis area and wanted to stay close to home, and I knew I wanted a career in STEM that involved problem-solving. Civil Engineering, especially the Environmental Engineering sub-discipline, aligned perfectly with my interests and passions.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff prepared me in many important ways. I developed a strong foundation in engineering fundamentals, but just as importantly, I gained practical, real-world skills. The program emphasized not just technical knowledge, but also communication, teamwork, and applied learning, all things that have been invaluable throughout my career.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

While many accredited engineering programs teach similar core concepts, Herff stood out by also emphasizing essential professional skills. I've consistently found that I was better prepared than many of my peers when it came to writing technical reports, giving presentations, and collaborating on teams. These transferable skills were developed through project-based learning that was integrated throughout the Civil Engineering curriculum, and they've served me every day in my career.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

It's difficult to name just one professor as the most impactful - many of them had a strong influence on me in different ways. That said, one who really stands out, even outside of the Herff College, is Robert Marchini. I took his Physics II course, which is a class most students dread, but he made it enjoyable...even in the summer! Within Civil Engineering, every professor I had was impactful in their own way: Drs. Camp, Ivey, R. Meier, Waldron, Pezeshk, Anderson, Arellano, Palazolo, and Moore - thank you all.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Yes, I was heavily involved in the American Society of Civil Engineers and served as its president during the 2005–2006 academic year.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

My biggest support system was the tight-knit cohort of fellow Civil Engineering students. We helped each other stay focused and motivated, taking things one day at a time and supporting each other through the challenges.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

Working at the Groundwater Institute every summer. It gave me practical experience and allowed me to apply classroom knowledge to real-world problems, which was incredibly rewarding.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

My advice is to take full advantage of everything Herff has to offer...don't just go to class and go home. Get involved in student groups, go to office hours, and seek out internships or research opportunities. The engineering field is more than equations, it's communication, collaboration, and hands-on experience. Also, don't be afraid to ask questions and try new things, even outside your comfort zone. Your time in college is what you make of it, and Herff provides a lot of opportunities if you're willing to pursue them.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

That I should have studied abroad! It's such a unique opportunity for growth, both personally and professionally, and that's hard to replicate later in life.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Absolutely, it was worth every penny. If I could do it over again, I'd be more disciplined with my time. I wouldn't cram for exams, I'd go to every class, and I'd get my homework done before going out or having fun. Those habits make a big difference.



# Sandra Knight

## Degrees

BS in Civil ('80)  
PhD in Civil ('96)

## Current Residence

Washington, DC

## Current Employer

Former Owner, WaterWonks,  
LLC

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

Honestly, I grew up in Memphis and hoped I would go out of state to a liberal arts school. But when I landed at Memphis and then in Engineering, I surprised myself at my aptitude for engineering.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

My engineering degrees opened doors professionally that I never imagined possible for someone who grew up in my social setting in Memphis.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Perseverance and a sense of self worth.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. Segui. He patiently answered all my questions and treated me respectfully.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

SWE, ASCE, Tau Beta Pi

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

Perhaps the hardest question. I had a partial scholarship, but I was working while going to school as a waitress. As I approached graduation, I knew I needed to finish college to secure a more permanent job and future.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

There are many things that come to mind, but in general, just how hard it was to excel in an extremely hard curriculum while also working. It was stressful and there were very few people on my circle that could understand and provide support.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

An engineering degree is hard but will contribute to society and provide personal benefits and satisfaction for the rest of your life. Herff College offers an accredited engineering program that can set you up for success.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

That I am worthy and I am capable and I can compete with the best.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

I am grateful to have landed in the Herff college and have been provided a scholarship while in school. I wish I had sought out advocates early in the journey as the curriculum was hard and I may not have been as prepared as others who started the program out of high school.





# Hak (Roy) Lim

## Degrees

BS in Computer Science ('05)  
BS in Civil ('19)  
MS in Civil ('11)

## Current Residence

Bartlett, TN

## Current Employer

OHM Advisors

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

Meeting with Dr. Martin Lipinski and Dr. Shahram Pezeshk has convinced me to enroll with the Graduate Program in Civil Engineering instead of Computer Science.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Career fair, interactions with potential employers, and realizing being an engineer is more than a job, it a long term commitment to continue to learn and give to your community.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Strong communication skills and proper documentations of your engineering work and tasks. You will get questions 5, 10 years later since most of our transportation projects are long term.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. Paul Palazolo. He taught me most classes than any other professors and he demonstrated to me that an engineer will never stop learning in his own classes. Examples such as he would make videos for us to solve problems, new apps from smart phone to interact with learning materials. He is evolving his classes.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

ASCE student chapter in Memphis. We did have a few events and gatherings in his house. He was so proud of his locomotive toys collection.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I was fortunately to started with an assistantship with Dean Office of Arts and Sciences as an IT support working with late MJ Garrett. Eventually Dr. Lipinski offered me assistantship to work as RA in IFTI. During the stay with IFTI, this really has made an impact on me knowing researches and publications we were working on would make a different for our city to grow.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

Dr. and Mrs. Lipinski invited all the Research Assistants from IFTI for a Christmas gathering in his house. He was so proud of his locomotive toys collection.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Interaction is the key. Visit the college, talk with professors and students. Reach out to alumni.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I wished I would have paid my visit to Herff College on my first bachelor program. I don't seem to recall why I did not.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

It would be priceless. If I can do this again, I would consider to complete a Phd program instead of stopping at Master program.



# David Oppong

## Degrees

BS in Civil ('18)

MS in Civil ('20)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

City of Memphis

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I felt a draw to the University of Memphis when I was applying to school and I had a desire to work in the community when I finished school.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

The exposure to professional societies and leadership roles were integral to meeting mentors and learning about the civil engineering industry. In addition to my technical education, I was able to build my soft skills.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Working in teams and also working with people from all walks of life. Also professionalism, how to write and how to conduct research to address problems and find solutions. I also was afforded the opportunity to take the first engineering leadership class that Herff offered. The skills I have learned help me in my career now and I have had the privilege of participating in the etiquette dinner for the past two years.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. Stephanie Ivey. She sparked my interest in the transportation industry and helped me learn that the road to a successful career does not have to be linear. She also provided me with the opportunity to attend graduate school and work for her to further my education.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Yes. National Society of Civil Engineers, American Society of Civil Engineers, Institute of Transportation Engineers, TLSAMP, Engineering Student Council.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

My professors had open door policies which proved to be very helpful. Also forming community with my fellow classmates and other Herff staff was paramount to my success. Involvement in student groups such as NSBE and TLSAMP was very helpful as well.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

I have made some of my closest friends while at Herff so any opportunity that we could be together whether it was social or academic created fond memories at the college of engineering. I also will always remember getting encouragement from Dr. P and Dr. Camp in the Civil Engineering Department.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Take the time to ask questions about the college and ask former students about their experience. The Faculty and Staff are very open and will take the time to ask questions.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

The skills that you learn from your initial years in school build on each other so I wish I had spent more time grasping concepts when I was earlier in my school career.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

I would say so. The cost of attending helped sway my decision to attend. I would have taken more time the summer before to refresh my math skills and I also would have taken more time to ask more questions when I started school.



# Mohamed Osman

## Degrees

BS in Civil ('06)  
MS in Civil ('09)  
PhD in Civil ('16)

## Current Residence

Germantown, TN

## Current Employer

TDOT, University of Memphis  
Adjunct

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

After researching several local and surrounding to the Memphis area colleges and their engineering programs, I found that the University of Memphis offered the strongest program to meet my academic and career goals. The Herff College of Engineering stood out to me, not only for its academic reputation, but also the incredible support I received from the faculty and academic advisors. As a new student, their guidance and encouragement helped me succeed in my studies. Their dedication to my success made a significant impact on my experience at the University of Memphis. The Herff College of Engineering stood out to me as a place where I could continue my education and build a solid foundation for my future in engineering.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff College of Engineering provided a comprehensive and diverse set of courses that were instrumental in shaping my career. The program's strong emphasis on transportation-related courses was particularly valuable to me, as it aligned with my interest in the field and prepared me for my roles in civil engineering and later over the years into my career as a civil engineer. I realized even more that my graduate studies and research at the Herff were very beneficial to me in relation to the different practical roles I adopted. In addition to the transportation focus, Herff also offered classes that were essential for graduate school preparation, especially as I was interested in furthering my education and pursuing a Masters and a PhD in Civil Engineering. The combination of practical, career-oriented courses and research-driven academics gave me a solid foundation to succeed in both professional and academic pursuits.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

During my undergraduate degree, I built a solid foundation of core engineering principals such as mechanics of materials, structural analysis and fluid dynamics, all of which are essentials for any civil engineer. I developed my analytical skills through hands-on projects and lab work. I gained technical communication skills through writing reports and presenting findings which were essential for working with teams. I developed a sense for project management by managing a small project for senior design, where I gained skills such as managing project timeline and team coordination.

During my graduate studies, I built a decent advanced technical knowledge through diving deeper into specialized areas such as transportation systems, traffic safety and operations, etc. I started building my research skills through being exposed to research methods and analytical techniques, preparing for academic or advanced technical roles. I deepened my understanding of problem-solving techniques through looking at more complex, real-world problems in the field of transportation safety and operations. I learned how to master designing and conducting original research, contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the transportation field, and I successfully accomplished several publications in very well-known and reputable Transportation Engineering journals. I additionally gained skills in mentoring graduate students both seeking Masters and PhD degrees in Civil Engineering. Finally, I developed skills for leading or co-leading research efforts across multiple universities, while working with top tier professionals in the Transportation field on an academic as well as professional practical levels.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

I would have to say Dr. Sabya Mishra, Civil Engineering Professor at the Herff College of Engineering. I worked closely with Dr. Mishra throughout my PhD degree at the UofM. Dr. Mishra has patiently provided me guidance and support every step of the way. Dr. Mishra taught me principals of research and supported and connected me to help across the UofM, as well as several others from other universities nationwide and internationally. I am forever thankful to Dr. Mishra and grateful for any and every opportunity he has supported. Dr. Mishra continues to provide such support to date. For the record, I must mention there were contributions and efforts to my journey from several other professors within the Civil Engineering Department.



**[Read the full Q&A!](#)**





# Paul Palazolo

## Degrees

BS in Civil ('74)

MS in Civil ('76)

## Current Residence

Cordova, TN

## Current Employer

University of Memphis

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

Meeting with Dean Nolte and Dr. John Smith when I was returning to college after military service.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

A good understanding that Civil Engineering was more than a degree but was a commitment to a career. I was lucky to have some of the best teachers who understood both the technical aspects of the profession and the meaning of the profession.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

The ability to stop after calculations and consider if the results were actually possible or realistic. Also, taking the time to think and plan how to approach a problem before actually starting to work on it.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. John Smith. From a group of really dedicated and impactful professors, Dr. Smith stands out for me. He included me in some wonderful research opportunities that showed me the connection between theory and practice. He taught me in a number of classes and in every one of them, added a wealth of knowledge about environmental topics.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I was involved with EERI and SSA, both of which gave me the opportunity to travel, present my research, and attend lectures.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I was funded through the GI bill for four years but during that time I also worked for Dr. Smith and Dr. Anderson in the environmental engineering lab. During this time, the lab was full of students and faculty and the interactions with both the faculty and other students definitely kept me focused.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

The group that I studied with during my undergraduate program. We studied together and competed to get the highest grade on tests. I think it raised all our grade points. This group also made up the core of the intramural group in Civil Engineering, The Steel Sewer.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Visit. Meet the faculty. Meet the students. See if you are comfortable. This will be the basis for your career and some of your lifelong friendships.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I wish I had spent more time with the faculty, learning how to be a great teacher.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Absolutely. Nothing really except work harder in Soil Mechanics.



# Alireza Shahjouei

## Degrees

MS in Geophysics ('15)  
PhD in Civil ('15)

## Current Residence

New York, NY

## Current Employer

Marsh Global Risk, Data and Analytics

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

The Civil Engineering Department at Herff offered and is well known for a unique research area in engineering sesimolgy (led by Dr. Pezeshk) that only a few universities in the US offered at the time. Working with Dr. Pezeshk was the main reason to enroll in Herff.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff provides a wide range of academic curriculum along with environment you need to focus on the research topic.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Beside the technical skills gained in structural/earthquake engineering and engineering sesimology, Herff helped me to expand the soft skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, project and time management, as well as thought leadership.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. Shahram Pezeshk - my doctoral degree's advisor

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Yes. Earthquake Engineering Research Institute (EERI), Persian Student Association (PSA), Executive Board Member of the UoM Student Event Allocation Committee

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

In addition to support that I got from my family and close friends that is essential especially for an international student like me, I was fortunate to receive financial assistance toward my education costs, including a fellowship from the Herff College of Engineering. Dr. Pezeshk was very supportive and helped students attend conferences and workshops in which we not only presented research work and exchanged ideas with peers but also created a broad network with both academic and industry leaders.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

There are several, but I do recall a moment when my advisor and I received a note that our proposed model (a part of my doctoral research work) was accepted as part of a big project with the goal to support the update of the USGS's national seismic hazard map (and the model is currently used by USGS).

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Great choice! Just make sure you spend the time wisely and first know and then leverage the great resources available to you at Herff and broadly at UoM. The word is evolving so fast and though specialization is absolutely a demand on market, the work efficiency would be achieved by gaining more diverse skill set working in an interdisciplinary team work environment.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

There are tons of resources available across Herff departments as well as UoM's departments/colleges. I knew a few at the time and tried to leverage yet I could have done it better and more. These resources increase the efficiency of the work especially in the reserach topics toward dissertation/thesis.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Absolutely yes - if I wanted to start over again, I would engage more in the interdisciplinary projects.



# Jesse Simpson

## Degrees

BS in Civil ('16)

MS in Civil ('18)

PhD in Civil ('20)

## Current Residence

Phoenix, AZ

## Current Employer

Huitt-Zollars

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I wanted to pursue civil engineering because I knew that it was the foundation of so much of our society. I wanted to be the person responsible for solving problems and improving the lives around me.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

My undergraduate studies taught me how to think like an engineer - approaching problems from an analytical perspective and searching for solutions. My graduate studies taught me how to teach myself, to be self-reliant, and how to lead others.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

The most practical skill I learned through the program was how to teach myself new things. When I finished school and got my first interview, I told my interviewer that he should hire me because, "Whatever you need me to learn, I'll learn it faster and with less effort from you than anybody else." That person decided to give me a chance to prove that claim, and I still work closely with him to this day. Without my experiences at Herff, I never would have made that claim, nor would I have been able to back it up.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. Mishra was the head of my dissertation committee and the primary professor whom I worked with during my graduate studies. He did so much to encourage me and guide me along that path, and it was because of his help that I had so much success while I was in the Herff College.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I attended a few ASCE and ITE meetings, but the main group that I interacted with was the Baptist Collegiate Ministry off Patterson Street.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

My family was always supportive of my path. I focused on my ultimate goal of improving the world and passing on my knowledge to future students.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

In Dr. Camp's first freshman lab, he had us do the classic egg drop project. We had to prepare an egg to fall multiple stories without cracking. I asked him what supplies we could use, and he looked at me and said, "Well, what supplies can you get?" My mind shifted from what was available in the classroom to what my group could find or buy nearby, how quickly we could assemble materials, and testing prototypes. It encouraged out-of-the-box thinking and expanded my perspective on what I could do at Herff.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

It's easy to focus on the material - the coursework, the equations, the theory - but that's not what's really important. Focus on practicing the soft skills: effective communication, working as part of a team, and thinking critically about things. If you can master those things, that will be what sets you apart.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

Internships are incredibly valuable. I didn't pursue any internships during my time at Herff, and it was one of the things I regretted the most. You're going to learn a lot in class, but there is so much to learn that the classes can't possibly cover it all. Internships are where you start to understand why you're learning what you're learning.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Absolutely. Given the chance to do it over, I would definitely get a summer internship



# Logan Sirbaugh

## Degrees

BS in Civil ('21)

MS in Civil ('23)

PhD in Civil (in progress)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

University of Memphis,  
Southeast Transportation  
Workforce Center

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

As a lifelong Memphian, I chose Herff College of Engineering to remain close to my family while pursuing higher education. The college's Civil Engineering program also appealed to me due to its diverse range of opportunities and concentrations within the field.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff College of Engineering prepared me for my career through its intimate learning environment, featuring easy access to professors and smaller class sizes. The college also provided numerous opportunities for undergraduate and graduate research in various areas of Civil Engineering, while student organizations like the Institute of Transportation Engineers offered leadership roles, professional development, and valuable connections with active Herff alumni.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Throughout my time at Herff College of Engineering, I gained several valuable skills and knowledge in a variety of areas. These include leadership skills, an understanding of the importance of active involvement in professional and student organizations, and proficiency in a variety of transportation engineering areas. I have also gained experience in conference planning and K-12 education and outreach.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. Stephanie Ivey has undoubtedly been the most impactful professor. Since beginning work with her in 2019 as an undergraduate researcher and continuing as her graduate research assistant, Dr. Ivey has provided me with numerous professional connections and opportunities across various fields, leading to scholarships, leadership positions, and awards. Her guidance has not only instilled confidence in my abilities but also continuously challenged me to grow professionally and personally.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Yes, I have been actively involved in several student organizations at Herff College of Engineering. These include the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), Tau Beta Pi, and Earthquake Engineering Research Institute (EERI). I took on leadership roles within ITE, serving as the student chapter president and as the committee chair for the 2024 SDITE Student Leadership Summit.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

As a college student, I had a strong support system from my peers, professors, and family. This continuous support, combined with constantly reminding myself of my long-term career goals, helped me stay focused on my goals.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

One of my greatest memories at Herff is the late nights spent working on our senior design project. Despite the long hours and challenging work, these moments became incredibly special. The shared experiences have created friendships that have lasted well beyond our undergraduate years.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Jump into student organizations and research opportunities as soon as you can. The friendships and professional connections you'll develop there are invaluable and can shape your entire engineering journey.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

Get involved in as many engineering events and conferences as possible - they're more valuable than I realized. These experiences were some of my best times and led to many unexpected opportunities.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Every minute invested in Herff has been worthwhile, and my journey is not over yet! I do not think that I would change anything - it's brought me my closest friends and given me the tools to jumpstart my career.



# Alireza Soltani

## Degrees

PhD in Civil ('17)

## Current Residence

Seattle, WA

## Current Employer

CNA Insurance

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

Herff College of Engineering's mission to provide quality education, foster critical thinking, and address regional and national challenges strongly influenced my decision. Its commitment to student success, international perspective, and inclusive, vibrant learning environment aligned perfectly with my goals as an aspiring structural and earthquake engineer. Additionally, Herff's emphasis on integrating research, instruction, and service assured me I would gain the skills and opportunities needed to make a meaningful impact.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff College of Engineering prepared me with hands-on learning and cutting-edge research in earthquake engineering, sustainable design, and resource protection. The close-knit community and expert faculty equipped me with the skills and knowledge to address real-world challenges and improve community resilience.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Herff College of Engineering equipped me with both hard and soft skills essential for my career. I gained deep theoretical knowledge of seismic behavior and practical field experience in seismic tests—combining classroom knowledge with real-world application, like transforming blueprints into resilient structures. Alongside technical expertise, I developed problem-solving, teamwork, and adaptability, preparing me to address seismic challenges with precision and collaboration.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

By far, Dr. Shahram Pezeshk was the most impactful professor during my time at Herff. As my advisor, he was a source of unparalleled knowledge, wisdom, and inspiration. His dedication to advancing the field of earthquake engineering was matched only by his commitment to his students' growth. Whether guiding me through complex seismic theories, collaborating on groundbreaking research, or braving the challenges of fieldwork together, he set the gold standard for mentorship. Beyond his brilliance as an engineer and educator, Dr. Pezeshk brought a contagious energy and sense of humor that made even the toughest days enjoyable. His ability to balance high expectations with genuine care and support made all the difference in my journey. Working with him wasn't just a privilege—it was a masterclass in resilience, excellence, and passion for the work.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Yes, I was actively involved in student groups during my time at Herff. I served as the president of the Earthquake Engineering Research Institute (EERI) Student Chapter in Memphis, where I led initiatives to advance research and awareness in earthquake resilience. I was also a member of the Memphis Persian Student Association, contributing to efforts that promoted diversity and cultural exchange within the university community. These experiences enriched my leadership, teamwork, and cross-cultural communication skills.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

As a student, I was supported in every way needed, from academic guidance to navigating life as an international student. Resources like visa assistance, housing support, and a strong community helped me stay focused on my goal, driven by my passion for earthquake engineering and a clear vision for success.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

My greatest memory from my time at Herff is the fieldwork I did with my advisor, Dr. Shahram Pezeshk. The first experience of conducting real seismic tests with him and other students was unforgettable—seeing all those theoretical concepts come to life was incredible. The fieldwork itself was transformative, teaching me resilience and toughness. It not only solidified my passion for earthquake engineering but also shaped me as a person.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

I highly recommend Herff College of Engineering to anyone considering enrollment. If you stay focused and goal-oriented, Herff provides all the resources, support, and opportunities you need to succeed.

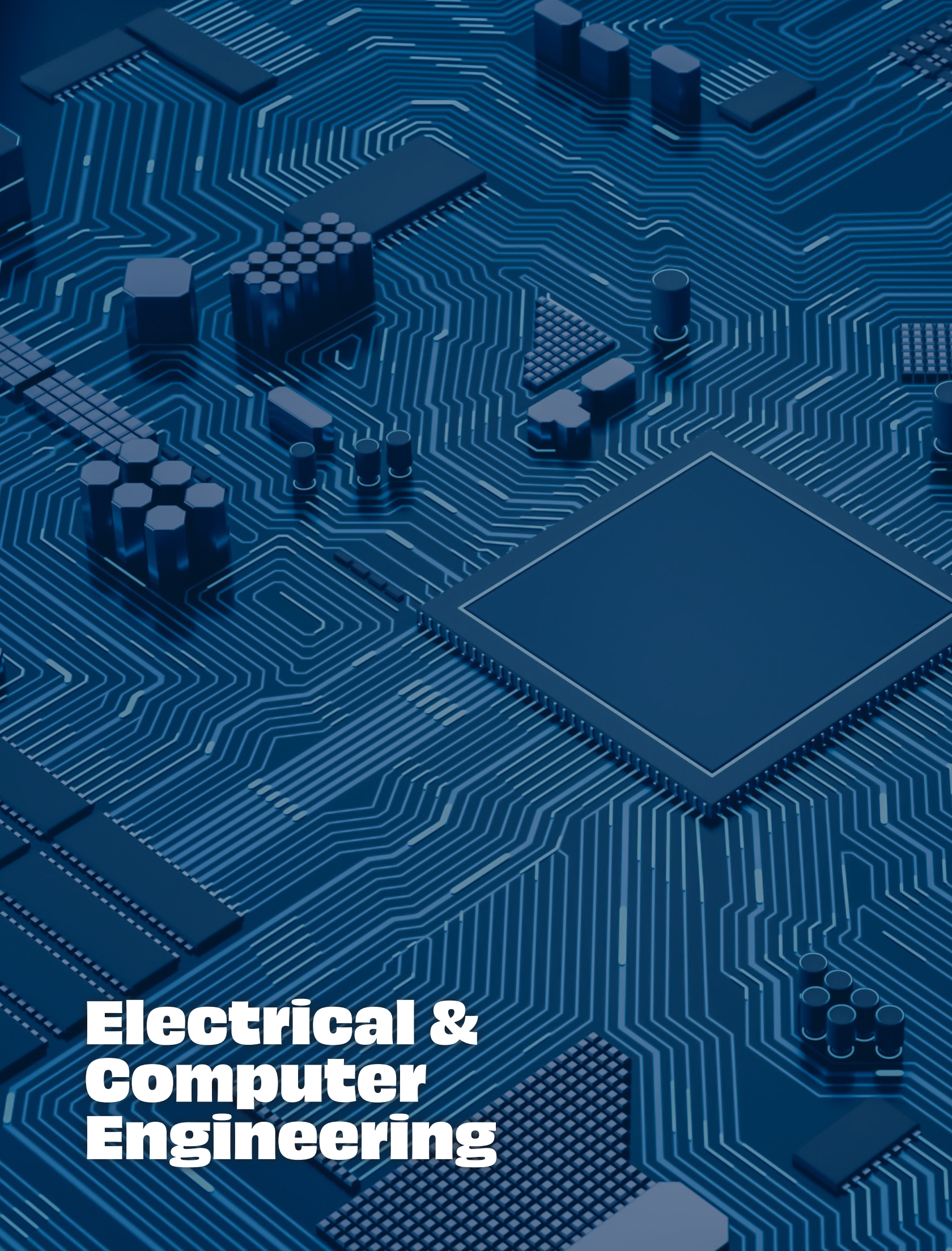
### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

Looking back, I wish I had known to truly enjoy the journey and savor every second of it. The PhD program at Herff is challenging, and there were times I just wanted to get it done. But now, I deeply miss the efforts, the challenges, and even the tough times. If I could go back, I'd remind myself to embrace every moment and make the most of the experience.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Absolutely, my Herff experience was worth it. I was fortunate to receive full funding, which made the journey even more rewarding. If I could do it over again, the only thing I'd change is to enjoy the journey more—embracing every challenge and moment along the way.





# **Electrical & Computer Engineering**





# Jared Becksfort

## Degrees

BS in CE ('99)

MS in EE ('06)

PhD in CE ('20)

## Current Residence

Germantown, TN

## Current Employer

St. Jude Research Hospital

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I became interested in physics and computer science in my late teens, and computer and electrical engineering seemed like an efficient way to combine the two into a productive career.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

I use programming, system design, and probability theory daily. I was also helped by professors not cutting me any slack or being impressed by subpar work at all.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Random signals should be taught to everyone in the world regardless of major. Probability theory is critical to understanding the modern world. I liked all the programming classes. I ended up not using the electronics courses very much, but I liked them.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

I would say that the late Dr. Dailey was probably the most influential, which is sort of a surprise to me because I would not have said that at the time I graduated. He was very much about getting the answer right. If you did not get it right, you needed to put in more effort, as simple as that. I think this was good for me to be exposed to at that age. At the time I graduated, I would have said that the now late Dr. Halford, who was my advisor during my master's studies. He was a great professor, and contacts I made through him and projects of his that I worked on influenced my life in surprising ways later.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

No.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I don't recall having any formal or organized support. I did work with other students in study groups.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

I was in my late teens and early 20's in college. It was great for reasons I probably cannot put into print. During graduate school, though, I was impressed by the rigor of the courses. It was a major step up from undergraduate work.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Engineering is a very good choice for an undergraduate or graduate degree. There is almost no field in which an engineering degree will not help you get your foot in the door. If you understand the basics of your chosen engineering specialty, you will see the world in a more interesting way. You better be ready to work, though.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

That you really need to get the basics down quickly. In the first few semesters, I learned just enough for the test, but that results in a knowledge deficit over time that makes the more advanced courses much more difficult.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Yes, definitely. I had a scholarship! Even if I had not, I think Memphis is a very affordable school and the engineering program is very good. So, even with the extra fees for engineering, it has a lot of value.



# Laura Campbell

## Degrees

BS in EECE ('90)

MS in EECE ('91)

## Current Residence

Chattanooga, TN

## Current Employer

Tennessee Valley Authority

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I am from a small, rural town and wanted to attend a school in an urban area. I was also a Cecil C Humphreys Scholarship recipient, which was a great help in the affordability of my college experience.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff set the foundation for a strong technical career in engineering but also a mindset and approach to problem solving that has served me in many different types of roles that I have had throughout my career.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

The Herff education sets a strong foundation for how to approach problems and systematically approach problems. I use these skills daily and have made a real difference not only as an engineer, but in life.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Babajide Familoni. Dr. Familoni is not only a brilliant engineer, but he also possesses a high EQ. He was challenging but encouraging. He is the person that inspired me to continue with the post-graduate studies.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Yes, Tau Beta Pi (engineering honor society), Alpha Delta Pi (sorority)

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

My future husband helped me keep perspective in the midst of the heavy coursework.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

As a leader in Tau Beta Pi, we were invited to attend a conference in New Mexico and tour Sandia National Laboratory. I recall being in awe at the work that the engineers at the lab were accomplishing.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

First, ensure that your math skills are strong. Four years will seem like a very long time, but it is a very short time in the course of a career. A degree from Herff will be one of the best moves of your life.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I knew but needed to be reminded that all of the hard work and sacrifice would all be worth someday - and it has been worth it - everyday for thirty-three years.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

The Herff experience was the best investment that I have made in my life. I easily passed the Fundamentals of Engineering (FE), and passed the Professionals Engineers Exam on the first try. I think this says a great deal about the quality of education that I received. The experiences I had in Tau Beta Pi (the engineering honor society) prepared me for future team leads and ultimately formal leadership roles as my career progressed.



# Jabia Chowdhury

## Degrees

MS in EECE ('18)  
PhD in EECE ('22)

## Current Residence

Texarkana, TX

## Current Employer

Texas A&M, Texarkana

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I was offered a graduate research assistantship from the electrical and computer engineering department for my doctoral degree, which was a suitable match for my area of study and course curriculum design.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff college offers timely professional resources, state-of-the-art research facilities, and immense opportunities to learn. Herff helped me to be a researcher and helped me to enhance my professional expertise.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

I completed my master's and Ph.D. program at Herff and learned many professional and personal skills that helped me grow as a professional. I have been able to learn many tools that are necessary for my research field.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

I would like to mention my supervisor, Dr. Madhusudhanan Balasubramanian. He was a dedicated mentor who not only guided and motivated me but also fostered my intellectual growth. His unwavering encouragement inspired me to delve deeply into my studies.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

We have a vibrant student community in and around Memphis. Bangladesh Student Association is a large student organization at our university. BSA connects students with a lot of resources in the university hosting many cultural occasions where we have robust international student participation in the university.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

My experience as a Teaching Assistant in the department was incredibly beneficial and helped me financially. The college's inclusive environment fostered a vibrant international community and encouraged interdisciplinary research.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

A defining moment during my college years, specifically in my last semester of my doctoral degree, was when I became a mother. It was an incredibly special experience. Another cherished memory was the day I earned my Ph.D. Sharing that accomplishment with my daughter and my family at my doctoral convocation ceremony was truly heartwarming and a momentous occasion for our family.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

I would like to encourage those who are joining the college. Herff is a place where you can find every resource you need to be a successful graduate student. Enjoy connecting with people who have diverse professional expertise, set your goals, and navigate your time effectively. We live in a time of ample of opportunities, with unprecedented accessibility to resources. Flourish professionally, and contribute to the broader world. Your contribution really matters to the world!

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

While life inevitably presents challenges, it's how we navigate these difficulties that truly matters. During my graduate studies, I faced my own obstacles. Reflecting back, I wish I had realized that these challenging times often offer opportunities for personal growth and resilience.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Yes. It was a broad experience.



# Ronald Driggers

## **Degrees**

BS in EE ('84)  
MS in EE ('86)  
PhD in EE ('90)

## **Current Residence**

Tuscon, AZ

## **Current Employer**

University of Arizona

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

Graduated from Millington High School and Memphis State University was close and convenient.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

The academic rigor prepared me well to collaborate and compete with any engineers. This was noticeable during my time in Washington DC at Army Night Vision Lab, Army Research Lab, and Naval Research Lab.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

How to write, present, and perform independent research.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Professor Carl Halford was an outstanding professor and mentor. He was a national asset and he graduated a large number of students who went on to make major differences in national security.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Tau Beta Pi

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I was poor and I really needed to graduate to start having a decent income. Our professors said that, as an engineer, you will not get rich, but you would have a good life.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

The time with my doctoral colleagues. I cannot remember who I went to high school with and I can remember a little about undergrad. However, all the doctoral students I went through school with are still very close. We all support each other to this day.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

It will prepare you for a fulfilling and interesting career.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I wish I knew about opportunities like the DoD SMART program. There are a good number of programs for students that can support them through school that you just don't hear about.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Yes, definitely. I have had a wonderful career and, even though the path has been challenging sometimes, I don't regret any of the journey.







# Elijah Durkee

## Degrees

BS in EE ('22)

MS in EE ('25)

PhD in EE (in progress)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

University of Memphis

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

For my undergraduate I decided to attend Herff due to location to home and finances, as I received full ride to the university based off merit scholarships through Herff and the University combined. After studying for my undergraduate, I decided that the environment aligned with my desires in a university and college and applied for graduate school.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

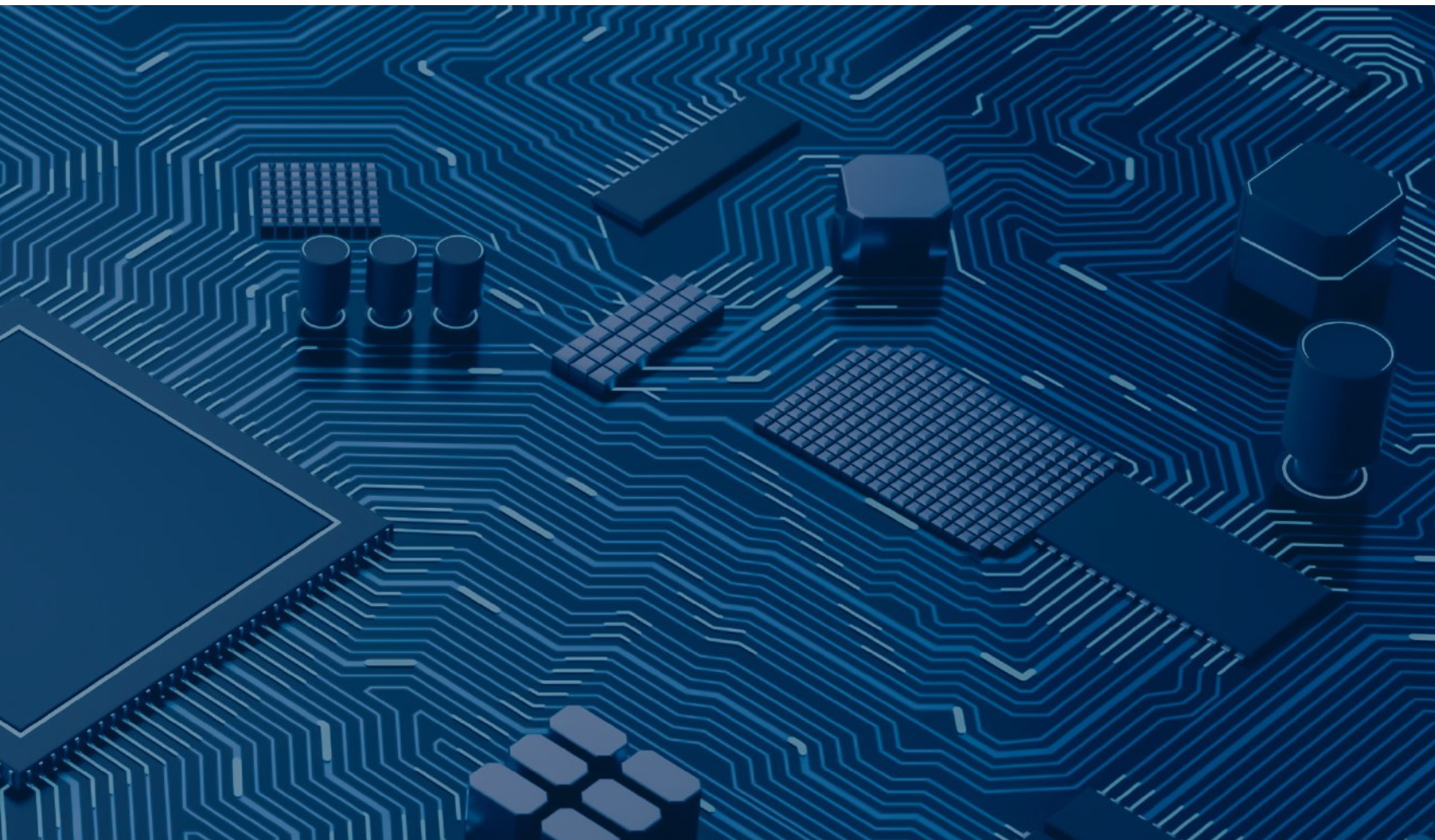
Dr. Hasan Ali, my advisor, has not only helped me progress as a graduate student but also provided lots of insight and support in undergraduate studies. He also taught some of my most enjoyable courses from undergraduate.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

One thing that has truly helped my time at Herff is the faculty of the college. Faculty members like Isaiah Surbrook, Betsy Loe, and countless others have directly helped numerous times to guide me through my academic and personal problems, in times of need.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Yes, Herff was worth it for me. The college as a whole continues to provided me with worthwhile development not only academically but also professionally.





# Sreya Ghosh

## Degrees

MS in EE ('11)  
PhD in EE ('15)

## Current Residence

San Francisco, CA

## Current Employer

OpenStore

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

My decision to attend Herff College of Engineering was influenced by its strong graduate program in Electrical Engineering, which offered significant opportunities for research in signal processing, an area I was particularly interested in. Additionally, as an international student, the cost of the program played a role in my decision, as it provided a balance between academic rigor and affordability.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

My career involves solving complex problems with data-driven solutions, and my time at Herff College of Engineering taught me how to effectively approach and solve these challenges.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

During my time at Herff College of Engineering, I learned to make sense of ambiguity through data, which has been foundational in my work as a data scientist. While my corporate aspirations differ from my research in computational microscopy, the program equipped me with first-principles thinking that I regularly apply to build data-driven solutions. I still use a lot of my coursework, particularly the material from 'Random Signals and Noise,' almost daily in my current role.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. Chrysanthé Preza had a profound impact on my life. Working closely with her for six years instilled in me a strong work ethic, sharpened my technical skills, and gave me the confidence to tackle difficult problems. Most importantly, she taught me to be unapologetic about being the smartest person in the room when necessary.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I was a part of the IEEE and SWE. I was also a part of the Indian Students Association.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I had a lot of support during my time at Herff College of Engineering, from my lab and advisor to my friends and family back in India. I was fortunate to be immersed in an environment where everyone was goal-oriented, and there was no sense of despondency.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

Of the many wonderful memories of publications, graduations, I warmly remember hosting the Women Experiencing Engineering Sessions. Getting to talk to high schoolers, especially inspiring girls to join engineering will always be one of my best memories.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

My advice to those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering is to embrace the challenges and opportunities that come with it. You'll find mentors, like I did, who will push you to grow, and peers who are just as goal-oriented.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

Discomfort is growth.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Absolutely! One key piece of advice is to identify your areas of weakness early on and focus on building a solid foundation before diving into more complex coursework. Herff College of Engineering offers plenty of resources to help you strengthen those areas, and doing so will set you up for success. Be proactive in filling those gaps, and don't hesitate to ask for help—the supportive environment is one of Herff's strengths.



# Sagnika Ghosh

## Degrees

MS in EE ('13)

PhD in EE('18)

## Current Residence

Nashville, TN

## Current Employer

Tennessee State University

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

The supportive academic environment and opportunities for scholarships and funding played a significant role in making my decision. The college's well-equipped labs and research centers, offered the hands-on experience I was seeking. Additionally, the strong ties Herff College had with industry and its emphasis on practical, real-world applications made it an ideal choice.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff College of Engineering provided me with a strong foundation for my career through advanced education and hands-on experience in Electrical and Computer Engineering under the guidance of DR. Mohd. Hasan Ali. My degree was focused on power quality enhancement and cyber-physical systems, prepared you to tackle complex issues related to modern power grids, time delays, and cybersecurity. Herff college laid a strong technical and research-oriented foundation that has been instrumental in shaping my academic and professional achievements.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

The program equipped me with several crucial skills and knowledge areas that have been instrumental in my career. Power systems and grid technologies, especially in enhancing power quality and integrating renewable energy sources, formed the backbone of my research and teaching. Additionally, cybersecurity for smart grids provided essential expertise in safeguarding energy infrastructure from emerging digital threats, a growing concern in modern power systems. I also benefited from a strong foundation in research methodology, learning how to approach complex engineering problems systematically, which has been invaluable in securing research grants and publishing papers. Proficiency in simulation tools like MATLAB and Simulink allowed me to model and analyze power systems effectively. Lastly, the program emphasized project management and collaboration, skills that prepared me to lead multidisciplinary research teams and handle large-scale projects, both in academia and in collaboration with industry partners.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Working with Dr. Mohd. Hasan Ali as my advisor for both your master's thesis and PhD dissertation gave you deep expertise in power systems, optimal reclosing of circuit breakers, and smart grid technologies. These experiences shaped my research direction and teaching philosophy.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Indian Student Association: provided me a sense of community and belonging being so far away from home.

IEEE: Gave me professional platform to harness my potential.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

The Electrical and Computer Engineering Department has been instrumental in my journey to being a professor. I started as a graduate student and without the financial support from the college and the department, I wouldn't have been able to complete my degree.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

My greatest memory from my time at Herff College was successfully defending my PhD dissertation on "Power Quality Enhancement of Modern Power Grid considering Time Delays and Cyber-Attacks". It marked the culmination of years of hard work, research, and collaboration with my advisor, Dr. Mohd. Hasan Ali. That moment symbolized not only personal achievement but also the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the evolving field of smart grid technologies. The support and encouragement from faculty and fellow students during that process made it an unforgettable and deeply rewarding experience.



**Read the  
full Q&A!**





# Christopher Howell

## **Degrees**

BS in EE ('05)

MS in EE ('07)

PhD in EE ('10)

## **Current Residence**

Stafford, VA

## **Current Employer**

U.S. Army C5ISR Center  
Research and Technology  
Integration Directorate

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

Poverty, pre- and post U.S. military service, influenced my decision to attend Herff College of Engineering. Relatedly, my support system was located in Memphis, and I had always desired to become an engineer. So after realizing the few opportunities I had even after exiting the U.S. Army, I enrolled in the Herff College of Engineering.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff College provided me a high quality education, that enabled me to be competitive in the job market. Because of the education I received at Herff College I was able to change the trajectory for my life. Herff College taught me that in life most opportunities are reserved for the prepared. Herff College prepared for multiple careers by instilling foundational knowledge in me regarding subjects like computer engineering, optics, image processing, and applied physics, and challenging me to relate that knowledge to many other disciplines.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Herff College provided me valuable skillsets that I still use even today to become and remain successful. I learned to model and characterize optical sensors at Herff College. I also learned how to design experiments and analyze and assess human and/or algorithm task performance at Herff College. These skillsets continue to allow me to support my career objectives. In short, Herff College taught me how to truly become a dreamer, thinker, and doer. I gained a 'no-limits' mentality to who I could become and what I could achieve. If I could dream it, then I felt confident that I could think through the problem and figure out a way to get it done.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. Carl Halford. Dr. Halford was an extremely brilliant, patient, and relatable professor. Dr. Halford helped me focus on what goals I was trying to achieve rather than the obstacles that were in my way. Dr. Halford taught me how I learn best by requiring me to overcome my challenges head-on, but always being available to help me think through my alternative solutions. Dr. Halford also introduced me to how to conduct research on a professional level. Dr. Halford was the most impactful professor for me because he genuinely cared about my success, both as a person and as a student.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I was involved in the Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (LSAMP) program, the McNair Scholars program, National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE).

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I maintained full-time employment to handle my financial needs and utilized my immediate family to help coordinate and support the logistics that accompany starting a family with small children while in college.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

My greatest memory was completing my PhD in Electrical Engineering and walking across the stage. This achievement resonates with me the most because I was not only the first in my family to obtain a graduate degree, not mentioning a PhD degree, but I was also the first African American to graduate with a PhD in electrical engineering at Herff College.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Do it! You will never regret your decision. If you desire to learn and be able to apply the prerequisite skills so that you are successful in any workforce in any region, enroll in Herff College of Engineering.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I wish I had known more about how to prepare for upcoming class lecture so my educational experience would have been more proactive verse a reactive experience. Knowing how to organize my notes and learning what I don't know before I attend class proved to be extremely helpful for me in graduate school. Knowing what I didn't know before coming to class allowed me to ask the right questions of my professors that helped me be successful with my homework and (mostly) kept me from burning the candlestick on both ends without a resolution.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

College tuition is overpriced in my opinion in general, so I'm biased when I respond to this question. My answer is no, the Herff experience was not worth the price. I say no because I had to work full-time while attending undergraduate as a double major in electrical engineering and physics. I had to sacrifice a part of education to find the funds to pay for college. As a very successful underrepresented graduate of Herff College of Engineering, had I been able to afford college better, then I would have been able to learn even more during my Herff experience. Doing it all over again, I would learn more programming languages industry is using rather than just Matlab.



# Masoumeh Kapourchali

## Degrees

MS in EECE ('16)  
PhD in EECE ('19)

## Current Residence

Anchorage, AK

## Current Employer

University of Alaska  
Anchorage

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I decided to attend Herff College of Engineering for my PhD because of my strong interest in data science, and Herff was well-equipped to support my studies in this area. Additionally, I was offered a research assistantship, which provided both financial support and valuable research opportunities.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff College of Engineering significantly prepared me for my career through its rigorous curriculum, which provided a deep understanding of computer engineering and data science fundamentals. The opportunity to network with established researchers and observe successful academics further enriched my learning experience. My research assistantship allowed me to attend and present my work at various conferences, helping to build a professional network and increase my visibility in the data science community. These experiences were crucial in shaping my career path.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

In addition to technical skills like advanced analytics and data modeling, my time at Herff College of Engineering also taught me to effectively collaborate with diverse teams and apply creative problem-solving strategies. These experiences have strengthened my ability to persist and adapt, preparing me well for various situations in my career.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

During my time at Herff College of Engineering, I was influenced by many dedicated professors. I'm grateful for each of their contributions to my growth.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I was involved with the Institute for Intelligent Systems Student Organization (IISSO) at the University of Memphis.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I had support from family encouragement, a research assistantship, and guidance from mentors and peers. Knowing I wanted to stay in academia helped me stay focused on building research skills, gaining experience, and reaching my goals during my Ph.D.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

During my five years at Herff, I have mostly good memories, from learning new things and sharing my research findings through presentations and publications to engaging in meaningful discussions outside of research. The combination of discovery, collaboration, and connecting with others made that time truly rewarding.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

My advice for those considering Herff College of Engineering is to focus on doing the right work and putting in the hard work. Don't get discouraged by challenges---everyone faces them, but they're part of the journey. Herff provides a supportive environment where you can grow, learn, and truly push yourself, so embrace the opportunities and stay committed to your goals.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I wish I had been more involved with student groups. I spent most of my time focused on research, which I'm glad about, but getting more engaged with others could have provided additional valuable experiences and connections.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Yes, it was definitely worth it, and I would do it again. I wouldn't change much, as the experience meant a lot to me.





# Keith Krapels

## Degrees

BS in Math('84)  
BA in History ('86)  
MS in EE ('00)  
PhD in EE ('00)

## Current Residence

Huntsville, AL

## Current Employer

US Army Space & Missile  
Defense Command

### What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?

I wanted to be an electrical engineer.

### How did Herff prepare you for your career?

Not only did I get the advanced degrees and knowledge in the MSEE & PhD programs, but my advisors mentored me to apply for and do an AFOSR fellowship ultimately creating my desire to do R&D for the DoD. They also pushed me to write conference papers and participate in professional societies, which put me on the path to becoming a recognized expert and leader in my field.

### What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?

Initiative and independence to build self confidence in my technical knowledge and skills.

### Who was your most impactful professor? Why?

Dr. Carl Halford. He provided mentorship and guidance throughout my educational experience and beyond. His work ethic and leadership example provided the baseline for my own. And, he remained in touch, feeding students and graduates into the DoD as lab interns and as new hires.

### Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?

IEEE and SPIE professional society local chapters.

### What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?

Throughout my graduate program, I had assistantships. As a Master's student, I had a teaching assistantship and taught EE undergraduate labs. During the PhD, I had a research and teaching assistantship and taught undergraduate EE lower division classes. These opportunities not only ensured I became an expert but they also grew my confidence in standing in front of large groups and polished my communications skills and ability to "read" and audience.

### What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?

Working in the labs with my battle buddy Dr. Ron Driggers (now an Endowed Full Professor at the University of Arizona Wyant College of Optical Sciences). The relationship started in grad school and has endured and evolved and been really beneficial throughout my career.

### What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?

Want it. Work hard. The material is tough, but the reward/result is worth the effort. There is a tremendous amount of satisfaction in researching/designing/building/testing new technologies into new systems. And the relationships you build while at Herff will last a lifetime.

### What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?

People and relationships are as important as the technical knowledge and skills. Most everything in life is a team effort. People skills aren't really taught in Engineering.

### Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?

Absolutely.





# Franz Parkins

## Degrees

MS in EECE

PhD in CE ('20)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

St. Jude Children's Research  
Hospital

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I have an Engineering background in Academia and Enterprise.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

I was prepared to join the workplace with a broad set of skills in the AI field that spanned the entire computation systems stack.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

I learned Computer Vision and Machine Learning methods

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. Balasubramanian was most impactful due to the relevancy and depth of the subject mater that he taught.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Briefly with IEEE and Club Soccer

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I joined a dissertation writing program.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

Sitting down with my advisor and formulating a final plan to finishing the dissertation requirements.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

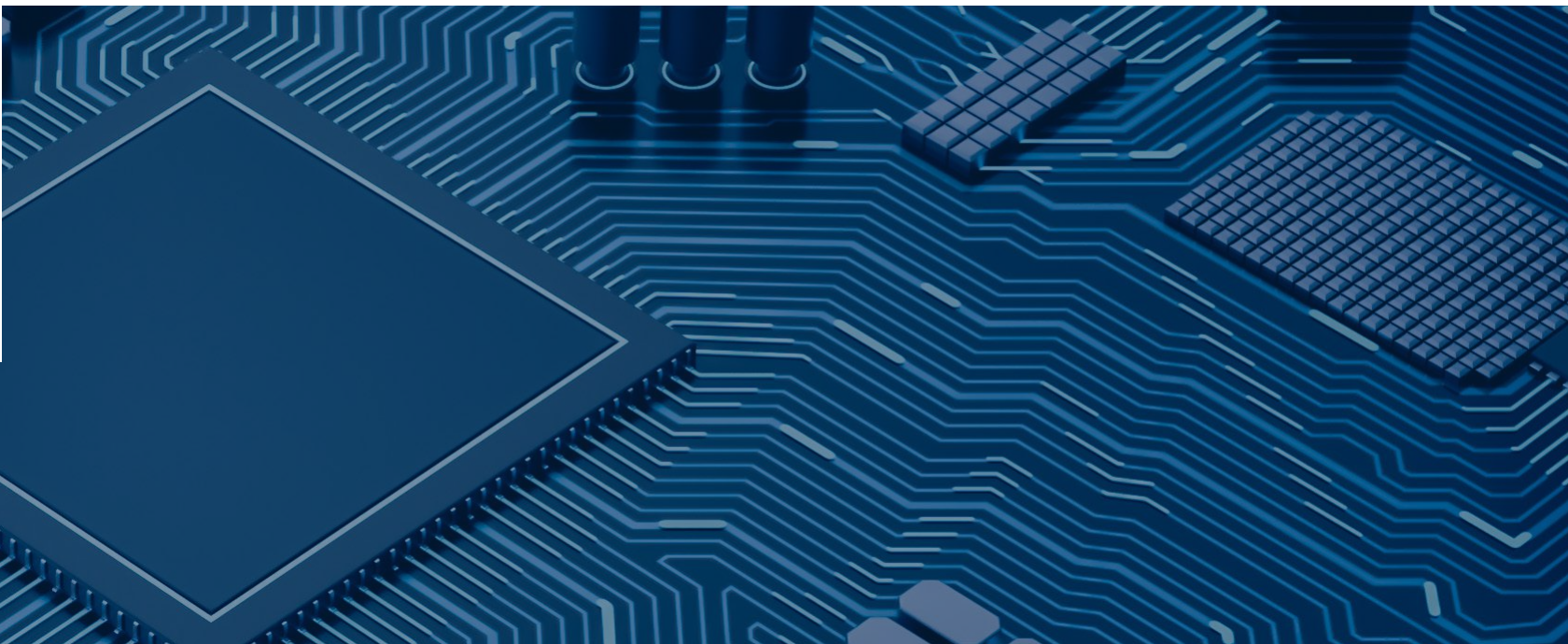
It is hard work to finish the program but the payoff is well worth it.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

Writing toward the dissertation should happen from the beginning on a regular cadence.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Well worth it but, I would take 4 hours of each Friday to write toward the dissertation.





# Kory Robinson

## **Degrees**

BS in EE ('11)  
BS in CE ('11)  
MS in EE ('14)

## **Current Residence**

Memphis, TN

## **Current Employer**

Memphis Light, Gas and  
Water Division

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I chose Herff College of Engineering because of its focus on practical, hands-on learning and robust industry connections. The program's emphasis on real world applications and the chance to work closely with experienced faculty aligned perfectly with my career goals and interests.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff provided me with a strong technical foundation, hands-on experience, and advanced problem-solving skills through rigorous coursework, labs, and projects. The emphasis on teamwork, communication, and project management was also crucial in preparing me for a successful engineering career.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Throughout the program, I developed several key skills that have been invaluable in my career. Problem solving skills allowed me to breakdown complex challenges into manageable parts and find effective solutions. Project management skills taught me to manage time, teamwork, and resources efficiently to meet deadlines and deliver quality work. Clear communication helped me convey technical concepts to diverse audiences, and adaptability enabled me to swiftly adjust to new technologies and methodologies as appropriate.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

During my Physics II course with Dr. Robert Marchini, I was introduced to a unique method of understanding electrical engineering concepts that has profoundly shaped my approach to problem-solving. Dr. Marchini had an exceptional ability to draw parallels between electrical engineering and other fields, particularly medicine. When we delved into electrical circuit concepts, he stated that with the right perspective, we could all think like physicians.

One of the most memorable aspects of his teaching was his comparison of electrical circuit components to parts of the human body. For instance, he likened resistors to blood vessels, controlling the flow of electricity much like vessels regulate blood flow. Capacitors were akin to the heart, storing and releasing energy as needed, while inductors were compared to the lungs, managing the flow of magnetic fields as lungs do with air.

This analogy not only made the abstract concepts of electrical engineering more tangible but also broadened my understanding of how interconnected different fields can be. It encouraged me to think beyond the traditional boundaries of engineering and apply a multidisciplinary approach to solving problems. Today, I find myself drawing connections between seemingly unrelated fields, a skill that I attribute to Dr. Marchini's innovative teaching methods. His influence has been instrumental in shaping the way I approach challenges, making me a more versatile and creative problem solver.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

As a student, I was involved in the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE).

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

In college, I relied on academic support, mentorship, and campus resources to help stay on track. Personal support from family and friends kept me balanced and motivated. Effective time management, while maintaining a clear focus on short and long-term goals helped me succeed throughout my collegiate journey.



**Read the  
full Q&A!**





# Hanieh Shabanian

## Degrees

MS in EECE ('17)  
PhD in EECE ('21)

## Current Residence

Billerica, MA

## Current Employer

Western New England  
University

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

Research studies of the faculty and scholarships

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff College of Engineering provided me with a solid foundation in both technical expertise and critical thinking, which have been essential in shaping my career. The strong work ethic and interdisciplinary perspective I gained at Herff continue to influence my approach to teaching and research today.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Throughout my time at the Herff College of Engineering, the most valuable skills I gained were problem-solving and adaptability. The program's emphasis on hands-on learning and real-world applications taught me how to approach complex technical challenges with creativity and precision. This ability to break down problems and devise innovative solutions has been crucial in my academic career, particularly in research and project development.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. Balasubramanian was undoubtedly the most impactful professor during my time at Herff College. As my PhD advisor, he not only guided me through the complexities of research but also set an example of what it means to be an outstanding mentor. His approach to advising was one of patience and encouragement, focusing on fostering a genuine love for learning rather than just accumulating credits. He taught me how to navigate the research process with curiosity and rigor, while also demonstrating the importance of treating students with kindness and respect. His emphasis on balancing academic excellence with humanity had a profound influence on my own teaching and advising philosophy. I aim to embody these same qualities as I mentor my own students today.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I received teaching and research assistantships during my master's and PhD degrees. Also, I received some travel support from the college and university to attend a couple of conferences and present my accomplishments.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

One of my greatest memories from my time at Herff College of Engineering is not only the invaluable education I received but also meeting the love of my life. We were both students in Herff Engineering, and our journey began on the very first day of orientation for new students. From that moment, we supported each other through the challenges of our studies, and it's especially meaningful that we graduated together with our PhDs. Our time at Herff wasn't just about academic growth; it was also the beginning of a lifelong partnership.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

For anyone considering enrolling in the Herff College of Engineering, my advice is to fully embrace the opportunities the program offers. Herff provides an excellent blend of technical education and hands-on experience, but it's up to you to make the most of it. Be curious, ask questions, and don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone—whether that's taking on a challenging research project or participating in extracurricular activities.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

One thing I know now that I wish I had understood during my time at Herff is the importance of balancing technical expertise with soft skills like communication, teamwork, and leadership. While the technical knowledge I gained was invaluable, I've come to realize that success in engineering—and in any career—requires the ability to collaborate effectively, communicate ideas clearly, and lead with empathy.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Yes, my experience at Herff College of Engineering was absolutely worth the price. The education, mentorship, and community I found there provided me with the foundation I needed for a successful career. The investment was not only in technical knowledge but also in personal and professional growth, which has had a lasting impact on my journey.

The background is a deep blue with a fine grid pattern. A large, glowing shield with a dashed outline is centered in the upper half. Below it, a circular interface element with concentric rings and crosshairs is visible. The overall aesthetic is high-tech and digital.

# **Engineering Technology**





# Christopher Barfield

## Degrees

BS in ET ('14)

MS in ET ('17)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

Agilent Technologies

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

My decision to attend Herff College of Engineering was heavily influenced by the things that I learned during orientation. After hearing the great things and projects that the Herff College of Engineering would offer, I was all in.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff College of Engineering prepared me for my career in various ways. Firstly, by teaching me critical-thinking skills, as well as preparing me for the advancements that were to come in technology. Additionally, it was emphasized within the Herff College of Engineering that learning in college is just the beginning. The real growth happens outside the classroom.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

I found that emphasis on data analysis tools such as Microsoft Excel were most helpful in my career. Additionally, the format of the labs prepared me for project management and being able to self-manage tasks.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Professor Carl Williams helped me prepare for my career tremendously. His thoughtful way of teaching courses, as well as his emphasis on Excel core skills has impacted my life in immeasurable ways.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Engineering Ambassador; Society for Black Engineers

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

My parent were very instrumental to the decisions I made, and still make today. My mother taught me to stay focused by managing distractions and celebrating small wins. My father taught me to never settle, and always work to improve. Those lessons have guided me throughout life.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

My greatest memory at the Herff College of Engineering was creating a mini barbeque grill in my Tool Automation class with Mr. Hewitt. Mr. Hewitt always taught the most fun classes and had interesting ways to keep the students engaged. During the lab of the Tool Automation class, we were taught various welding and CNC operations. It was very nice to create the mini barbeque grill, and grill a few brats as a way to celebrate success with my fellow lab-mates.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

I would convey to a future student that Herff College of Engineering is all about building solid connections through education, getting involved outside of the classroom, and learning a host of hard and soft-skills that are vital to professional environments.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I wish I knew to keep up with the constant changes in tech—it moves fast, and being adaptable is just as important as knowing the right coding language or tool.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

The Herff College of Engineering was absolutely worth the price. I feel honored to say that I graduated from Herff.



# Robert Hewitt

## Degrees

BS in ET ('96)

MS in ET ('03)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

The University of Memphis

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

By an overwhelming margin, it was the nature of the Engineering Technology degree that was attractive to me. It was a perfect fit for my interests and background as a working adult.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

The Herff College of Engineering challenged me to work hard to achieve exactly what I wanted to out of my career. The college and the ET department put me in touch with people in industry who were doing the kinds of work that I wanted to do. I was able to build technical expertise, and to take my skills to a new level.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Developing an understanding of the statistics behind variation offered key insights into a wide range of problems that affect manufacturing quality assurance. Being able to quantify this variability and find its causes led me to become a better designer.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Most of the professors in the ET department were phenomenal back in the 1990's, but Glenn Davis was the best by an overwhelming margin. Glenn took time to make sure that those who wanted to learn had as much opportunity as they wanted. Glenn was an overwhelming presence with a gentle spirit, and he was a gifted teacher. Teaching was a natural ability for him, and I try to channel that spirit in my own classes.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I was heavily involved in SME (formerly the Society of Manufacturing Engineers).

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

Having the option to take classes at night was a huge advantage for me. I worked as a draftsman and later engineering technician during my time at the University of Memphis. Being able to take night classes made it possible to get my degree while I worked.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

Learning to run machine tools for the first time. The hands-on nature of the ET curriculum was hugely appealing to me.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Find a major that suits you as an individual. Don't major in something without understanding what those majors do vocationally. Search for job postings that appeal to you and build your education based on what industry is looking for.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

Not during my time at Herff, but I wish I had know about Engineering Technology while I was still in high school.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Absolutely it was worth the price. A degree from Memphis was a great value at the time.



# Juan Jaimez

## Degrees

BS in ET ('22)

MS in ET (in progress)

## Current Residence

Bartlett, TN

## Current Employer

FedEx

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I attended in the early 1990s and did not complete my degree. I was able to return in 2016 and complete my BS in Engineering Technology. My desire to prove to myself and my children that anything is possible if you dream, think and do, greatly influenced my desire to continue my educational journey at the Herff College of Engineering.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Early on, I was not as prepared as a student and did not have the mentors I needed. I think it led me to try hard and once I did reach out to Herff, I was advised and mentored well from my professors and staff. That has really helped me to continue and improve in my career.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

I learned real world expertise from my professors as well as project management skills that were really helpful to me.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Professor Todd Canaday because he really presented the material in such a way that it related to things I would come across in my career.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

No groups but I was a member of The Mighty Sound of The South marching band between 1991-1994.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I had support from friends and my family but also from my advisor within Herff. This kept the drive and focus on the ultimate goal and led me to keep on going.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

Presenting my senior project and getting to see my poster on the halls of the ET building.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Do not be afraid to ask questions and seek the help needed to understand something. Herff is full of wonderful admins, advisors and staff that will help you out if you seek the knowledge.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I just wish the technology from today were available then so that I could have learned more during my time.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

I would have reached out for more help in the nineties and not been so scared of failure. It was worth every penny to get to walk across the stage and receive my diploma in front of my children.





# Marlene Meredith

## Degrees

BS in ET ('17)  
MS in ET ('23)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

R & N Systems Design

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

Kathy Atkinson was an engineering advisor. She and I had a full discussion regarding the various options at Herff and she helped me find my niche.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Professional development was critical in learning to write like a professional, my classes trained me in various programs I now use daily, and I met my boss at a University of Memphis hosted function.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

My AutoCAD skills began at Herff with Tom Banning, which were pivotal in the beginning of my career. Professional communication has been the skill I used the most though.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Undergraduate: Professor Tom Banning, he really cares about his students and their education.

Graduate: Dr. Kevin Berisso, he helped me attack problems from a new angle and asked questions I had not considered.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Yes, Tiger Judo Club, Tau Alpha Pi, Golden Key, Phi Kappa Phi, Sigma Alpha Pi

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I received financial support from scholarships as well as support from my friends, family, and professors. Focus was not something I struggled with.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

My greatest memory from my time at Herff was helping with First Lego League children's robotics competition.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

My advice would be to set priorities for everything, including mental health and stick to those priorities.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

Taking breaks is important and so is spending time with friends unwinding.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

I wouldn't do anything differently.





# Lucas Rivers

## Degrees

BS in ET ('23)

MS in ET (In Progress)

## Current Residence

Cordova, TN

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I have a brother who graduated from the HCOE with a degree in electrical engineering. He had heard good things about the faculty in the Engineering Technology department. I felt that the hands-on nature of ET was a good fit for me, so I went for it.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

HCOE provided everything I needed to be successful. The ET department exposed me to a wide array of topics and challenged me to build upon and improve my skills.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

The hands-on nature of the engineering technology curriculum along with the industry knowledge of the faculty were the most impactful. These two factors allowed me to better understand how engineering decisions affect others in an organization.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

All of the professors in the ET department had an impact, but there are two professors that had a particularly large influence on me. Professor Robert Hewitt was an incredible mentor and is a highly skilled teacher. He always made time for students who wanted to learn, and he made mistakes into valuable learning experiences instead of failures. Professor Deborah Hochstein was another professor who I could always rely on. She always believed in me and provided guidance, particularly early in my time at HCOE.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I was not, but I do regret not being involved in them.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

My family was my biggest support. They were always there for me and willing to help me learn. A close friend of mine provided guidance and unwavering support as well. I can not thank professor Hewitt enough for his support either. He had a large impact on me throughout my time at HCOE. I could not have made it through without any of those who supported me. Their support kept me focused on the goal.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

Using machine tools and operating a CNC machine for the first time. It was extremely fun to be able to put what I had learned into practice and to see how design decisions affect the production of a part.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

The faculty is there to help you. Try to learn as much as you can about the different degrees and specializations that are offered, and be open to the advice you receive. Picking the path that suits you will help you learn and stay focused.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

The importance of networking while in college.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

It was absolutely worth the price. If I could do it over again, I would become more involved with student organizations and the job fairs held by the college.





# Scott Shankle

## Degrees

BS in ET ('99)

MS in ET ('01)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

Orchid Orthopedic Solutions

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

Coming from a small town in West Tennessee, I sought practical, application-based education and ROI for my time, effort, and resources in an engineering field. A state scholarship guided me to Memphis and Herff, where I found a “home” in the Engineering Technology program, perfectly blending hands-on learning and career-focused outcomes.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff provided a strong foundation through my BS and MS in Engineering Technology with a Manufacturing concentration, complemented by courses in Computer Science and Business. This combination equipped me for a career in Quality and Operations, eventually advancing to senior leadership. The UofM Co-Op program was pivotal, connecting me to roles at Smith & Nephew and Wright Medical that shaped my career path. These experiences sparked my passion for driving operational excellence, a pursuit I remain dedicated to today.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Herff equipped me with invaluable skills, from technical foundations in manufacturing processes and mechanical design to operations management principles like planning, health & safety, and lean manufacturing. The statistical coursework, in particular, has been a cornerstone of my career, shaping my approach to problem-solving and continuous improvement.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

It's hard to choose from so many, but Deborah Hochstein, Scott Southall, and Carl Williams were instrumental in my technical, teamwork, and leadership development. Their encouragement and belief in me—often more than I had in myself—helped build the confidence that has been critical to my career success and personal growth.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

As a student member of SME, I gained valuable real-world insights through plant tours, complementing my academic studies. Additionally, serving as a captain and an officer for the UofM Rugby Team further honed my leadership skills, competitive spirit, and ability to build strong connections—traits that have carried over into my professional and personal life.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

While the university and college both provided a wealth of support, I'd have to say my family and friends were the most important. Like the saying goes, “it takes a village” and it's incredibly value when you surround yourself with people who support you.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

The first thing that comes to mind is when Professor Hochstein asked me about teaching a class. Until then, I just considered myself just another one of the guys trying to make it through. After that, I started to think “You know what, I may actually be good at some of this!”. I think that was the start of my leadership development.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Focus on building strong relationships—your network will be invaluable. Align your education and career path with what you enjoy, but don't stress over having all the details figured out—they'll evolve, and that's okay. Maximize the ROI of your education and, most importantly, enjoy the journey.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I wish I could remind my younger self to embrace uncertainty; career paths evolve, and that's part of the journey. It's all going to end up great, so enjoy the process.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

It was definitely with the price! I consider it one of the highest value investments of my life. And I didn't like to dwell on hindsight, but I'm not actually sure I'd do anything differently. I've been pretty fortunate and worked be happy to do it all again!



# Ashely Woodall

## Degrees

BS in ET ('20)

MS in ET (in progress)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

Flintco

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

My cousin inspired me to study engineering technology. He made it seem possible to turn a dream into reality, so I switched my degree path from Nursing to Engineering Technology.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

The resume workshops helped me gain a basic understanding of how to structure a resume properly. Student organizations such as SWE and NSBE helped me develop my networking skills and surround myself with like-minded people. Job fairs every semester gave me confidence that I would eventually find an industry related to my studies that I would enjoy.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Networking is the one main skill that has helped tremendously.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Professor Hewitt & Professor Banning.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

SWE & NSBE

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

NSBE was my biggest support system. The study groups and fellowship kept me motivated throughout my studies! Mrs. Moses was always there to support us and that made a huge impact as well.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

Being an HCOE student ambassador! The friendships, experiences, and countless leadership development opportunities all made my time pursuing my undergraduate degree more meaningful.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Get involved with one of the student organizations to expand your network while pursuing your degree.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

The staff and professors will still support me after graduation.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

I would definitely do it again! Switching my major was the best thing I could have done!



# **Mechanical Engineering**





# Nathan Eason

## Degrees

BSME ('12)

MSME ('20)

## Current Residence

Bartlett, TN

## Current Employer

Siemens Smart Infrastructure

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

Knowing I could get an ABET accredited degree from one of the top institutions in our state at an affordable cost was likely to main influence that led to my decision to pursue a degree at Herff.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Herff provided opportunities for multi-disciplinary collaboration which greatly prepared me to work in my current field. Additionally, Herff offered professional preparation courses that helped prepare for interviews and the Professional Engineer's examination.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Problem-solving and resourcefulness are two things that have stuck with me. The ability to frame a problem, gather the available data, and reach conclusions are skills I learned through my days at Herff and apply daily in my career.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

This is a difficult question because I can think of instances from every professor that still stick with me to this day. Dr. Marchetta, Dr. Hochstein, and Dr. Janna were probably the most impactful in that they motivated me to challenge myself and pursue a graduate degree.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I was involved with Tau Beta Pi and the Industrial Assessment Center (IAC). My work with the IAC influenced my the direction of my career as I still work in the fields of energy efficiency and conservation now

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

Family and friends outside of the university, but also instructors and classmates on campus. It helped knowing that we (my fellow classmates) were in this together and at anytime we could reach out to one another or an instructor for assistance or encouragement.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

Standing in line at graduation and seeing and feeling the pride and sense of accomplishment on my fellow classmates...we worked hard and earned it. Working on my graduate research project is a close second.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Schedule a time to meet with students and instructors that are currently enrolled or teaching and discuss your goals and expectations for your college experience. Don't dismiss yourself as not being engineer before giving it a try.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I would have chosen to be more involved in undergraduate research opportunities. Undergraduate research provides opportunities to apply knowledge and skills to current questions in industry and academia. This is your chance to stand out as an undergrad!

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Absolutely...I've worked with graduates from some of the top engineering schools in the South, and I can confidently say that my education and career preparation at Herff was just as good, if not better, in many ways. If I had the chance to do it all over again, I would complete the accelerated 5-year BSME/MSME and probably just continue on to the PhD program. The college years seem like a long time in the moment, but 10 - 20 years later they will only feel like a long weekend. Take the few extra years to invest in yourself.





# Richard Komistek

## Degrees

BSME ('88)  
MSME ('89)  
PhD in ME ('92)

## Current Residence

Knoxville, TN

## Current Employer

University of Tennessee

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I came from Canada to play on the University of Memphis Racquetball team and decided the best path for me was to become an engineer.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

I thoroughly enjoyed the program and the interaction with the faculty in the Mechanical Engineering department. The faculty was instrumental on preparing me for the path that God took me on.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

The program prepared me for mathematical modeling, which has allowed me in my career to put the human on the computer screen for evaluating existing knee and hip implants as well as helping companies develop implants.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Can't just choose one. There were four: Tiang Tan, Gadius Lewis, Edward Perry and John Ray. All four of these professors challenged and supported me throughout my time at the University of Memphis.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I was very involved and later became the student president for ASME. During my time as President we won the Allied Bendix award for being the most active society.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

The faculty in Mechanical Engineering were my biggest support.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

Winning the Allied Bendix award for the most active mechanical engineering society because the University of Memphis, up to that point, had not done very well in this competition.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

The Herff College of Engineering does an excellent job developing engineers, preparing them for their career in engineering. I was given a great foundation that has allowed me to conduct over \$50,000,000 in research, guiding 25 PhD students, 8 Masters level students and numerous undergraduate students.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

How important engineers can be in society, making a difference in the lives of many people.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Thoroughly enjoyed my time in Memphis in the Herff College of Engineering.





# Jenny Farler

## Degrees

BSME ('24)  
BS in Physics ('24)  
PhD in ME (in progress)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

University of Memphis

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I liked the overall community at the University of Memphis and wanted to pursue a career in engineering.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

My classes and professors taught me specific things, but more importantly made me a more capable person. I think about the world differently now as a graduate student than I did as a freshman in college, and that is because of my engineering classes.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Aside from the information I learned from all of my classes, the biggest lesson I think I took from my time as an undergraduate student was to ask questions. During class, a job interview, or whenever one comes to mind. You can create so many opportunities for yourself just by allowing your curiosity to take over.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. Alex Headley was my advisor and most impactful professor during my time as an undergraduate student. He helped me explore different fields and career paths, build my confidence as a student, and overall become a better engineer.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I was in a sorority, Pi Beta Phi, and I was also involved in three engineering student groups, ASME, SWE, and Pi Tau Sigma.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

My family was my biggest support during my time as a college student. They always made sure to tell me they were proud of me, and coming home for family dinners always took my mind off of any stresses.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

My greatest memory was our final presentations of our senior design projects. After we completed our official presentations and were standing with our projects and posters in the hallways, everyone was so relaxed and excited after weeks of stress. My professors were all so kind and excited to see what my classmates and I had worked on, and it is one of my fondest memories. I was very proud of my group and of all my friends' achievements.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Engineering is always a tough major, but the faculty at Memphis really make a difference. The class sizes are smaller, and the professors make an effort to know you. Take advantage of this and build relationships with faculty members because they will make your experience so much more meaningful. Build relationships with your classmates early, and try to join student organizations. The more people you know, the easier it is to struggle through the hardest semesters together.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I wish I had known how much each class matters. Four years seems like an eternity, but you really only have so much time in college.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

I was fortunate enough to receive scholarships both from the department and from the university so that I did not have to pay for my school. If I could do it over again, I would try to get to know more of my classmates earlier on.



# Jonathan Faulkner

## Degrees

BSME ('22)

MSME ('24)

## Current Residence

Millington, TN

## Current Employer

University of Memphis

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I had family that attended the University of Memphis. This heavily impacted my decision to attend Memphis and I knew I wanted to go into engineering for a good portion of my life and I knew Herff College was my best option in my pursuit of becoming an engineer.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

The general curriculum at Herff best prepared me I would say. At Herff college I was challenged academically throughout my undergraduate program and even now in my graduate studies. It developed characteristics that are valuable for an aspiring engineer.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Throughout my undergraduate studies, I was always told that time management is crucial for success in the program. This is especially true now that I am a PhD student. Learning how to handle failure and to improve based on said failure is another skill I picked up being enrolled at Herff.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

The most impactful professor I had was Dr.Tan. While I do still have other professor I respect and have a relationship with. Dr.Tan's difficult courses forced me to learn the material well. In those classes I probably learned the most.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I was involved in Tiger Baja for about a year.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

My family and friends in the program provided a lot of support during my time as an undergraduate student and even to this day as a PhD student. One way I kept focused on the goal was knowing that people were in it with me.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

That is a difficult question. I have a lot of great memories at Herff but if I had to pick one it was after my senior design conference. Knowing I had made it to the finish line in my undergrad was a great feeling. It was a feeling of relief and a time to celebrate with my friends.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Know what you're getting into. There are many misconceptions about engineering. While we do get to design amazing things, there is a lot of hard work involved in designing and building them.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I would say I wish I knew how fast my time at Herff would fly by. I would say I wish I would have lived more in the moment.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

My Herff experience was definitely worth the price. If I were to do it over again I would try to live in the moment more and not worry about the future.



# Jeffrey Marchetta

## Degrees

BSME ('97)

MSME ('99)

PhD in ME ('02)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

University of Memphis

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

The commitment of the mechanical engineering program in providing quality instruction, excellent mentorship, and robust opportunities for research experiences. The graduate fellowship package was generous.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

The mechanical engineering curriculum delivered the right balance of depth and breadth of knowledge required for graduating students to be successful in the profession.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Critical thinking and problem solving.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Prefer not to answer and I would prefer that my answer not be published.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I was a student member and continue to be a professional member of AIAA, ASME, and ASHRAE. I am also an Associate Fellow of AIAA.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I learned very quickly that building peer and faculty relationships was important to my success in a challenging mechanical engineering program. The faculty were accessible and very willing to provide help and guidance. The department provided financial assistance for graduate students to attend both student and professional conferences.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

I have fond memories of taking a break from long hours of research work and playing cards with the other graduate students in the lab.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

The mechanical engineering program at the University of Memphis will absolutely prepare you for a successful professional career. You will have access to full time faculty instructors in all of your courses and reasonable class sizes will ensure you will not just feel like a number. The faculty want you succeed and there are plenty of resources available to you to be successful, if you choose to take advantage of them. Live on campus if you can, so you can be immersed in campus life and have the full college experience.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I wish I better understood the importance of engineering work experience in building a strong resume while I was in college. Perhaps because of this, I have worked closely with the college intern/co-op coordinator since I joined as a member of mechanical engineering faculty to expand work experience opportunities for our students, integrate soft skill development into the mechanical engineering curriculum, and emphasize to students the importance of work experience as a integral part of their engineering education.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

The engineering programs at the University of Memphis were and continue to be one of the great values among higher education institutions in the State of Tennessee and beyond. If I had to do something differently, I would have chosen to pursue an engineering work experience rather than work part-time in a non-engineering job while I was in school. Balancing work, engineering studies, and research was incredibly challenging and I feel I missed out on experiencing campus life and gaining valuable work experience.





# Bobby McVay

**Degrees**  
BSME ('98)  
MSME ('01)  
MBA ('16)

**Current Residence**  
Lakeland, TN

**Current Employer**  
Medtronic

## **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

Herff offered a nationally accredited Engineering program that had specialized opportunities in the Biomedical space, offered me a partial scholarship, and was local. It ticked all the boxes for me, and was the easiest decision I made.

## **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

The College of Engineering not only gave me the “book knowledge” necessary for my success, but also connected me with research opportunities that in turn led to publishing opportunities that then led to internship opportunities during my Graduate program. The program was very supportive, and helped me build a “body of work” that made me attractive to employers in the area.

## **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Throughout my interaction with the professors and Program Staff, they taught me the importance of disciplined documentation, and clear and concise writing. If you look for help, it is easy to find. If you seek assistance, it is always available. The people are what makes the program, and these are some great people.

## **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

I had the pleasure of studying under some amazing Professors, but if I had to pick only one . . . I would say that most impactful professor Dr. Gladius Lewis - for teaching me that failure is not failure if you learn from your mistake, and for giving me my first opportunity to perform some basic applied research and publish the data as an undergraduate student. Incidentally, and probably related, Dr Lewis also earns the award for “Most Difficult Exams.”

## **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I was very active in the Baptist Student Union. I played on an intramural flag football team, and attended quite a few Football and Basketball games on a Student Ticket over the years. GTG!

## **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I actually had to take a 2 year sabbatical and work full-time to realize that I really wanted to finish my degree and work in the Biomedical field, rather than the food and service industry. My friends changed their majors, but I always knew Engineering was the right fit for me. Once I was re-motivated to work at being a student, The College of Engineering was there with open arms.

## **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

I have so many fond memories, but I did recently return to the Fluids Lab and saw that my artwork is still on the walls! The Scuba diver about to be attacked by a shark is some of my handiwork (from 20 years ago).

## **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

If you want to be challenged, and emerge a stronger and more confident person, then you should go for it! I would say to you - “Don’t give up!” It will be difficult at times, but it is worth it. Stick with it, and you will never regret it.

## **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I wish my program had offered a class that covered the global regulatory landscape for medical devices. That was something I had to learn while doing.

## **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

My experience was worth every penny. I have a career that I love, it challenges me and forces me to continue learning, and the foundation was laid at the Herff College of Engineering.



# Benjamin Simmons

## Degrees

BSME ('99)

MSME ('02)

PhD in ME ('07)

## Current Residence

Lancaster, PA

## Current Employer

Hershey

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

Local and connection with the University Band Director through a community Band.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

Taught me how to organize and report information, prepare and present information, critical thinking skills, how to approach problem solving, how to work within a team, how to research and solve problems that are new to me.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Approach to problem solving and critical thinking skills. Presentation confidence.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

John Hochstein personal connection and skills taught as mentor and Advisor for many years together.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

AIAA and ASME.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

Professors kept me engaged and challenged throughout my years. Peers supported me through study sessions and group projects.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

Building a Pile of Computer style cluster in the department to enable research.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

The Herff college of Engineering is a good size to provide support, growth, and challenge. I have worked alongside graduates from many top engineering institutions and find my preparation from the Herff college to be equal to all.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

How special the friends and memories would be to me. As we worked to learn and solve problems, we bonded and several are still friends 20 years later.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

The price was a great value to me and had been well worth the expense throughout my career.  
I am not sure I would do anything differently.





# Randy Thornton

## Degrees

BSME ('99)  
MSME ('00)

## Current Residence

Huntsville, AL

## Current Employer

NASA, Marshall Space Flight Center

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

My wife was from Memphis and UofM gave me an opportunity to attend a good engineering school and be close to her family.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

The general course work provided a solid foundation, and the specialty courses, undergraduate thesis option and masters program gave me great depth in the subjects and areas that interested me.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Overall the program and individual time spent with multiple professors gave me a good solid approach to solving problems, even ones that were outside of my current knowledge and skill set. That foundational approach has been one of the keys to successfully solving real world problems in multiple disciplines.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. John Hochstein was the most impactful professor during my time at the Herff College of Engineering. Dr. Hochstein served as my advisor for both undergraduate thesis work and masters thesis in microgravity propellant tank fluid management. Whether working through problems in basic course work or more detailed specific problems with research work, Dr. Hochstein dedicated countless hours of one-on-one time with me. The more questions I had and the harder I worked, the more time he dedicated to my personal education. It was that kind of dedication that has always made me feel my education from the Herff College of Engineering was on par or superior to any other program in the nation.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Yes. I was involved in the AIAA student chapter and served as the president. I was also involved with the ASME chapter to a lesser extent.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I was not a traditional student as I had already spent a couple of years working as a mechanic then served four years in the Marine Corps, so my support system and needs were a little different. My wife was a big part of my support as well as the great professors that were always willing to give me the time I needed to answer questions and work on extra projects.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

Being the first student to complete the Mechanical Engineering Undergraduate Honors program was certainly one of them.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Work hard and be disciplined. If you stay ahead of your coursework everything will work out. Engage with your classmates, professors, and student organizations and absorb everything you possibly can. Don't be afraid to ask questions and volunteer to take on extra work or projects to help you learn.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

How big communication is to the engineering profession. Of all the complex and technically challenging problems I've worked over the years, good, clear, and consistent communication is a common key to getting through challenges.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Absolutely! The time, effort and money that I invested at the Herff College of Engineering has paid back many, many times over.



# Laura Whitsitt

## Degrees

BSME ('87)

MSME ('88)

## Current Residence

Memphis, TN

## Current Employer

LSWhitsitt Consulting

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

I always loved math and science. Several teachers recommended that I pursue engineering in college. I toured Herff College and really liked the opportunities presented to me.

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career?**

The Mechanical Engineering program at Herff prepared me to design orthopaedic implants and instruments and to solve problems during my time at Smith+Nephew. The leadership roles I held in engineering and other college organizations prepared me to lead teams and provided a foundation for the leadership coaching and board work I am now involved in since retiring from Smith+Nephew.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Problem solving, product design, teamwork, leadership.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

Dr. John Ray and Dr. Ed Perry. Both encouraged me to be the best student and engineer I could be.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

Tau Beta Pi (President), Pi Tau Sigma, Alpha Gamma Delta Sorority

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

My faith, family, friends and teachers were great support! The other students in my mechanical engineering class were the best. We worked together and supported each other through tough times and had lots of fun together. As far as keeping focused on the goal, I found it critical to be diligent in my studying and not fall behind. I found out quickly that all-night study sessions did not work for me.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

Being asked by my fellow students to be President of Tau Beta Pi. I had not really been focused on leadership at this time in my life, but taking on that role was the beginning of my interest in leadership which developed further throughout my career.

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

Go for it! If you love math and science, you'll do well. If you don't love math and science, I recommend considering a different career. It is important to love what you do, in school and in your career.

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

The importance of understanding business in a corporate engineering role. I would have taken a few business classes along the way, as well as biology classes given that I ended up in the medical engineering field.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

Absolutely. Costs for Herff were moderately priced and the scholarship I received covered my tuition and most of my expenses. I believe I was just as prepared for my roles as others who graduated from much more expensive schools.





# Will Van

## Degrees

BSME ('14)

MSME ('16)

## Current Residence

Richmond, VA

## Current Employer

KSB Inc.

### **What influenced your decision to attend Herff College of Engineering?**

Originally I attended a community college nearby for a different major, but by chance I ran into an old friend of mine who went to Herff College of Engineering and studied for Mechanical Engineering. Intrigued by the idea, I went to the university tour and talked to a very kind advisor at the engineering building and gave it a try, and the rest is history!

### **How did Herff prepare you for your career? .**

Having a very supporting staff at Herff College of Engineering is definitely helpful! The support circle within the college allowed me to attend career fairs, prepare for interview, talk to engineering professionals, and even review resumes. I was able to earn the opportunity to work at multiple internship using the connections provided by the Engineering Career Services manager, and those work experience allowed me to get multiple offers after graduation and jump start my career.

### **What skills or knowledge did you learn throughout the program that you found most helpful in your career?**

Being in the Herff College of Engineering provided me with the right mindset and the problem solving skills to resolve and tackle issues that occurs during my daily work routine, and the communication skills to present the issues to both management within the company and customers.

### **Who was your most impactful professor? Why?**

From the top of my list, Dr John I. Hochstein has been the most impactful professor, he was the one who introduced me to be the first students to participate in the Accelerated Bachelor to Master (ABM) Program in the ME major, and provided massive support during the thesis research as my advisor. I would not have been here without Dr. Hochstein. But there are many exceptional professors that helped me achieve my educational goals, just to name a few: Dr. Marchetta, Dr. Tan, Dr. Lin, Dr. Lewis, and the late Dr. Perry.

### **Were you involved in student groups? If so, which one(s)?**

I was fortunate enough to be part of Engineering Ambassador during my pursuit of bachelor degree and helped out many students and future students through activities and university tours. Also I was part of the TRiO program which provided me with study materials, computer access, and grants. And on top of the university programs, I was the President of Tau Beta Pi Engineering Honor Society, member of Pi Tau Sigma International ME Honor Society, ASME, and AIAA.

### **What support(s) did you have during your time as a college student? How did you keep focused on the goal?**

I guess I am naturally a social person during my years at Herff College of Engineering and kept in touch with everyone in the Engineering staff, and everyone have been helpful on sharing their experience and kept me on track for graduating. But by having appointments with Engineering Career Services, monthly meeting with TRiO advisor, and casual conversation with Student advisor really help me through the years.

### **What was your greatest memory from your time at Herff?**

One of my fond memory at Herff was working on Engineering Material class group project with a fellow student, we were testing a grease pin for stress using a strain gauge, on a farm tractor! We rode the tractor all over a private parking lot and rode over bumps, curbs, and rocky roads, and presented our research data and video during class! Everyone had a good laugh!

### **What advice would you give those considering enrolling in Herff College of Engineering?**

As someone who have gone through the curriculum and survived, I would suggest future engineers to make friends, create memories, stay engaged, and CREATE STUDY GROUPS ON WEEKENDS. You don't have to do this alone, get together, share ideas, help each other out, and explain how you could solve the homework questions, by explaining to others, it makes you better at understand the material and also helps others. Last but not least, participate in college activities, and connect with staff members!

### **What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at Herff?**

I wish I could participate in more student organizations and take advantage of the learning experience as junior engineer, because you can learn so much about how to be a effective engineer in the future by working together.

### **Was your Herff experience worth the price? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?**

It was definitely worth the price, considering with the scholarship and financial aids covered most of my tuition, and likely the best 6 years I have spend on getting my degrees at Herff. If I could do it over again, I would love to do a double major in MBA as well.

**Connect with us!**



