Chemical Engineering Student Produces Complete College Experience

By: Desiré Bennett

James Lucas is the UC College of Engineering and Applied Science Engineer of the Month for February. James maintains a 3.82 GPA in his senior year in the Chemical Engineering program while working toward a Bachelor of Science degree.

James has always wanted to live in a city and UC’s “beautiful urban campus” is one of the reasons he chose to attend the University of Cincinnati, but it was the opportunity to utilize cooperative education that most drew him to UC.

“I chose UC because of the strong co-op program,” he said. “I saw it as an opportunity to subsidize the cost of school while gaining invaluable experience in industry as an engineer and this program also provides the opportunity to travel the country and experience different cities and regions.”

James says he chose to study chemical engineering not only because of his love for math but for the flexibility of the major. “It allows you to work in variety of fields, roles and industries,” he said. “My career will also show this flexibility. I could work anywhere from in a process development in an R&D type role to a maintenance and reliability role.”

Through the co-op program James has had the opportunity to work as a process engineer at Dow AgroSciences in Midland, MI, Dow Chemical Engineering Solutions in Spring House, PA, working as a process engineer on Process Modeling, Design and Optimization, and as a production engineer focusing on VERSENE™ Chelants at Dow Chemical in Freeport, TX.

James says that through his co-op experiences he gained an appreciation for the soft skills (personal qualities) that are necessary for an engineer to be successful. “Each engineering student has about the same set of technical skills” he said. “In order to be successful in engineering and in the real world, it is the soft skills that will set you apart.”

James participates in several extracurricular activities. He is a
five-year volunteer at the Kidz Corner Kaw Valley Relay for Life, a member of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AIChE), has served as the president, chair and conference planner for the Chem-E-Car Competition, and is a TA for CEAS Engineering Education.

James says that managing his extracurricular activities, social life, and course work has been challenging at times, but keeping everything in balance is always his goal. He has advice on how to keep this balance. “Prioritize your day,” he said. “Understand that there are 24 hours in everyday and utilize each hour to its full potential – whether that be watching T.V. or finishing off the last bit of studying or exercising.”

James, who is a diehard Cleveland (Indians, Browns, and Cavs) sports fan “for better or worse,” advises fellow students to enjoy the complete college experience. “Take the time to experience on-campus groups, downtown and Newport, and especially any unique experiences that interest you,” he said. “Whether that experience is studying abroad in Russia or becoming a Resident Assistant in your dorm, each is once in a lifetime.”

After graduation James will work for Dow Chemical in Freeport, TX as a Production Engineer.