CEAS Students Receive 2012 Engineering Professional Practice Achievement Recognition Awards
By: Ashley Duvelius

15 CEAS seniors are honored by 2012 Engineering Professional Practice Achievement Recognition Awards for their outstanding co-op work as employees. They were recognized at an award reception on May 23rd.

“I chose to go into Computer Engineering because I’ve been working with computers my entire life. Even when I was an infant, my parents would hook my child seat up to their computer desk and let me pound away at the keyboard. Ever since then, I’ve loved computers and have been passionate about working with them,” recounts Aaron Alt, a computer engineering senior.

Alt chose UC for its internationally renowned co-op program. He values the real-world work experience along with its pay benefits to help with tuition. Alt did all of his co-op quarters at Northrop Grumman Xetron, a defense contractor located north of Cincinnati. Working as a software engineer with numerous responsibilities and projects, like being one of the primary developers for an automation framework and also designing and implementing low level device drivers, he gained knowledge that’s impossible to learn in a normal classroom setting.

“I’m extremely honored to receive this award. Growing up, one of the pieces of advice that my father would stress is that I should always try to be the hardest worker wherever I am. No matter what I’m doing, actions that I take at work should be driven by the motivation to make my employer look good because that will reflect well on myself. To me, this award proves the effectiveness of my father’s advice,” says Alt.

Upon graduation in June, Alt will return to UC to work toward his MS in computer engineering.

Excelling in mathematics and science in high school, Erik Hughes knew early on that he wanted to pursue a career which would enable him to solve problems and save people’s lives. As a biomedical engineering student, Hughes is proud to develop better instruments for doctors to use. UC was his first choice due to its accredited biomedical program and established co-op collaborations with hospitals. Also, Hughes is a Cincinnati native and has always been a huge Bearcat basketball fan.

Hughes did all of his 6 quarters of co-op work with Cook Medical, Inc. in Bloomington, Indiana. The company specializes in products that focus on endovascular intervention such as catheters, stents and wire guides.

“I was lucky enough to work on a wide range of products that Cook Medical, Inc. produces either designing new products or working with suppliers to improve upon existing product lines. Very rarely was I treated like a co-op that was incapable of doing the work of an engineer. That is really what made my experience so great with the company. I was made responsible for almost
every decision related to the project I was given rights from the start of my time there. This was terrifying at first but something that I grew to really appreciate,” reflects Hughes.

After June graduation, he will return to Cook Medical, Inc. as a full-time engineer. Hughes states, “I am surprised and grateful to have the work I've done during my time as a UC co-op recognized. I was one of the first UC co-op students hired at Cook Medical, Inc. and I am proud to have represented the University of Cincinnati and its co-op program in a positive way. I eagerly look forward to continuing the design work that I enjoyed so much during my time as a co-op student.”

**Einstein Nguyen’s** fascination with electronics and technology began at a young age. As a child, he would always take electronics apart to understand how they worked. Nguyen wondered what all the colorful components inside them were and so, he leapt into electrical engineering. To this day, he still takes all types of electronics apart but the devices actually work when he puts them back together.

Nguyen originally attended Wright State University for his freshman year. After hearing about UC’s nationally ranked co-op program, he transferred. Nguyen’s co-op experience with L3 Communications Cincinnati Electronics helped him to develop real-world knowledge of how a professional workplace operates. He was able to apply the fundamentals he learned in the classroom to the real work environment. Nguyen values his new skills of problem solving, working on a team and communicating on a professional level.

“This award is very special to me. I've always taken my co-op sessions head on with the intention of learning something new each time. I felt that, while at L3 Cincinnati Electronics, I’ve learned so many new things. I am very happy to see that my co-op work is being recognized,” Nguyen says.

With plans to work full time after graduation, Nguyen also wants to continue his education. He has an interest in programming and business as well as electronics. In the future, Nguyen will acquire his MBA or a degree in programming. He says, “I have a very creative mind and would like to be able to use it to create new things, such as new programs or marketing advertisement.”

Since environmental issues impact everyone in the community, **Jay Payne** knew he wanted a future in environmental engineering. He wants to protect others through an improved and healthy environment. Payne believes that this desire enabled him to excel within the Department of Environmental Health and Safety as well as in his co-op work with the General Electric Company (GE).

Upon hearing about UC’s academic diversity and its outstanding co-op program, Payne chose to complete his degree here. It was UC’s reputation and recognized engineering school that sold him. With the help of UC and the support of his manager from GE, Debbie Walker, Payne succeeded in 6 co-op terms. He has won several awards for his exemplary efforts including: GE
Above & Beyond Bronze Award, Imagination & Courage ('11); GE Global Reward and Initiative Recognition Award ('10 & ’11); GE Aviation Early Identification Development Nomination ('10); and four perfect score employee evaluations.

“The Outstanding Senior Co-Op Award symbolizes a ‘job well done’ to me. I have worked hard, moving to a new city every 3 months and virtually living out of my 2-door 1999 Honda Civic for the past 3 years,” says Payne.

Payne will soon start his career in GE Aviation’s Environmental Health and Safety Operations Management Leadership Program (EHS OMLP). Additionally, over summer break, he applied to work on Capitol Hill to better understand how politics affect environmental issues.

The love of working outdoors and working with hands-on application led Mike L. Schweer into his field of construction management. Schweer chose UC for the excellent faculty, convenient location close to home and its co-op opportunities.

Schweer completed 7 co-op terms with Kokosing Construction Co. Inc., a heavy highway construction company based out of Fredericktown, Ohio. He’s had the chance to work on major projects including: the interchange of I-75/SR-4 in Dayton, excavation of the US-33 Nelsonville Bypass and a bridge project as part of the I-71 Jeremiah Morrow Bridge (the tallest bridge in Ohio). Schweer also spent 2 co-op quarters working in Kokosing’s heavy highway projects estimating office.

Schweer comments, “Anytime my hard work in or outside of the classroom is affirmed I feel proud and honored.” After his June graduation, Schweer will begin full-time employment with Kokosing as a field engineer.

Computer science engineer, Robert F. Sikorski, originally began college as a mechanical engineer. He found it to be interesting and challenging, but not very engaging. Sikorski quickly turned to computer science, where he discovered a passion for programming and systems analysis.

Sikorski chose UC’s five-year engineering program because he valued the flexibility of changing majors within the program. He knew he could change his major, and still graduate on time.

For his co-op experience, Sikorski worked for Seapine Software Inc., a company based in Mason, Ohio that does enterprise software development. He worked primarily on the QA Wizard product line, automated testing software program that allows users to record actions against their systems and then playback the actions as tests to make testing of software in development easier and faster. Sikorski gained knowledge in assisting technical support and worked with Seapine developers to facilitate bug identification and fixes.
“The Outstanding Senior Co-op Award is an acknowledgement of the work that I put forth during my stay with Seapine Software Inc.,” reflects Sikorski. He will join Citigroup, Inc. after June graduation.

As a Venezuela native, Maria G. Suarez came to the US in 2006 as an exchange student. Like Nguyen, Suarez also had a fascination with taking electronics apart to see what was inside and how they worked. She also wanted to put her unbound imagination to good use and decided a career in computer engineering technology was the best way to go.

Having met great people in Cincinnati, Suarez wanted to find a college in the city. Since UC has a strong engineering program, she chose to come here. UC arranged a co-op experience at Chiquita Brands International in Cincinnati. Suarez did co-op rotation for two years, and was shown how the different IT teams operated. Not only did she gain technical skills but also interpersonal skills. Additionally, Suarez greatly enjoyed the opportunity to work with people from different cultures from Central and South America.

“For me this award is a reassurance that hard work pays off. I am very happy that I decided to go to UC because it has one of the greatest co-op programs and I was a part of it. Winning this award means a great deal to me because it is a huge accomplishment that my family and I will be proud of for a long time,” says Suarez.

Suarez looks forward to joining the Chiquita Brands International IT team as a full-time employee. She eagerly awaits the opportunity to demonstrate her acquired technical skills and to grow as a computer professional.

Other CEAS 2012 Engineering Professional Practice Achievement Recognition recipients include: Michael Downing of aerospace and ACCEND; William F. Hofmann in architectural engineering technology; Eric P. Moser of chemical engineering; Logan A. Naber in aerospace engineering; Nicholas A. Plataniotis of mechanical engineering technology; Simon E. Raver in materials engineering; Christopher J. Reinke of electrical engineering; and Katherine M. Warren in mechanical engineering.

The dedication and hard work of these engineering students is the essence of what continues to make UC’s co-op program an award winner!