

National Science Foundation grant helps students pursue education leading to engineering careers

A \$599,980 “Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)” grant from the **National Science Foundation** is helping Oakland University students pursue their career and educational goals in the fields of Industrial and Systems Engineering (ISE) and Mechanical Engineering.

OU received the grant four years ago to fund its Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) scholarship program, and the first group of PLM scholarship students are now graduating and beginning their engineering careers.

“The PLM scholarship program is more than just financial help,” said Russell Bauer, an ISE major currently working at Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA).

“It allows students to network and communicate with established professors within their fields. These professors can then assist students with projects, contacts, and most importantly, finding job experience.”



Russell Bauer, an ISE major at Oakland University currently working on VR technology at Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA), says the PLM scholarship program has helped him pursue his engineering education and find his "dream job."

The PLM scholarship program provides scholarships to 32 academically-talented, financially-challenged students in ISE or Mechanical Engineering programs at Oakland University.

“Being just shy of the Presidential scholarship requirements at OU, the PLM scholarship has been instrumental in me balancing funding for education and relieving some of the financial stress, allowing me to focus on excelling with my schoolwork,” Bauer said.

“Over my four years at OU, I have received \$4,800 a year from the scholarship, but the most valuable asset is still the connections I’ve made which have led to job offers.”

According to the NSF, another goal of the PLM scholarship program is to enable students to graduate in four years with a Bachelor of Science degree, and upon graduation, be capable of entering the high technology workforce or continuing their education at the graduate level.

As part of the program, students are organized in cohorts and assigned faculty and industrial mentors, who assist the students in obtaining summer internships.

“We are extremely grateful to the National Science Foundation for awarding us this grant,” said **Dr. Robert Van Til**, Pawley Professor of Learning Studies and Chair of the ISE Department. “We are enjoying working with our PLM scholarship students to help them through our engineering programs.”

“Several of the students have told me that the scholarship has been very important in allowing them to enroll in, and remain at, Oakland University. It is exciting to see the first group of PLM scholarship students graduating and starting their careers in engineering. They have been highly sought after by several companies. Next year is the final year of the program, so unfortunately we are not awarding any new scholarships.”

For Bauer, the PLM scholarship program has already provided him with the connections needed to find his “dream job.”

“I am currently working at FCA on advancing technologies such as motion capture and virtual reality, to speed up the new vehicle launch process,” he said. “The ergonomics side of ISE has introduced me to the motion capture side of work, while the PLM side of ISE has given me a lean manufacturing knowledge set which is sought after in the industry.”

For more information on Oakland University’s engineering programs, visit www.oakland.edu/secs.