

Student Letter

Several faculty members reached out to current students and recent alumni to ask for their impressions of Valparaiso and their experiences in a computing major.

Kaitlin Werth is a recent graduate of the College of Engineering (Electrical and Computer Engineering).

From: "Kaitlin Werth" Date: Nov 21, 2016 8:02 AM
Subject: Re: BUDNIK: Request for help / information to promote women in the CoE
To: "Mark Budnik"

Here are my responses for the two questions that you had sent! Have a wonderful Thanksgiving with your family!

1) How do you see Valparaiso University creating a supportive community for students interested in the computing disciplines (or of women in engineering in general)? Can you give examples?

Valparaiso University has always given me plenty of opportunities for leadership, whether it be in a club or the classroom or simply just managing the work needed to be done for a group project. Having those opportunities, paired with the encouragement and guidance that I always received from my engineering professors, helped to give me that confidence I desired to succeed. When you have confidence in yourself and your work, and the support of your professors and classmates, you have that supportive community that, in my opinion, Valparaiso University achieves so well.

Especially as a woman in engineering, when you believe in yourself and your teachers believe in you too, the confidence shows to others around you, including fellow peers. I felt that especially in my electrical engineering classes. I would continuously feel that my professors and classmates respected myself and my work, and when fellow students ever found that they were having a challenging time solving a homework problem, we came together as a group to work on it. Our ideas on how to tackle the problem were all equally heard, we always tried to push each other to work diligently and equally, and when we needed more help, our engineering professors were more than willing to make time to support us, give guidance, and point us in the right direction.

For students in general, who are interested in the computing disciplines, they can find great support from their professors at Valparaiso University. One of the biggest aspects of this that I appreciated was the electrical engineering professors' open door policy. They always made time to help us with homework, assist with prepping for an exam, support in searching for a job or internship, or just sit down to have a conversation. They are not only our teachers, but became our mentors, guides, supporters, and friends.

2) Can you give examples of the faculty serving as advocates for you in the computing/engineering disciplines?

Aside from my parents, some of my biggest supporters and advocates were my electrical engineering professors from Valparaiso University. One such example is Professor Mark Budnik. He always challenged me in his classes, and encouraged me to dig deeper into a problem to not just find the right answer, but to find the best solution. "Work smarter, not harder" he would always tell us – a phrase I still tell myself in my work. Professor Budnik always believed in us, and his constant encouragement that we will make successful engineers is just another way that our professors instilled a special and important confidence in us that has certainly helped me get to where I am today. Not only did he effectively teach us many facets of electrical engineering, but he inspired us to believe in ourselves and to see the potential and value that we have to offer.

Another such example is how our professors assist us in finding jobs and internships. Dean Eric Johnson has been a great supporter and a huge help in this area for me. He assisted me in reaching out to alumni

who could further help me in becoming a part of and having beneficial experiences at great companies. He has helped so many others too just by facilitating the College of Engineering career fair. This alone gives so many engineering students the chance to find great opportunities for a bright career.

Best Regards,

Kaitlin Werth