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ECU Engineering launches new mechanical engineering concentration as enrollment increases

GREENVILLE (8/14/2009) - The East Carolina University Department of Engineering will launch a new mechanical engineering concentration as it welcomes its fifth freshman class to campus for the fall 2009 semester.

Mechanical engineering is one of the broadest engineering disciplines. Mechanical engineers have the skills to support design and improvement of a wide range of products from supersonic aircraft to toasters and bicycles. Mechanical engineers may specialize in areas like combustion, thermal systems, machine design and robotics or crossover into advanced technologies such as artificial limbs and nanotechnology.

“We created the mechanical engineering concentration based on the request of regional industry and with the full support of our advisory board,” said Dr. Paul Kauffmann, chair of the ECU Department of Engineering in the College of Technology and Computer Science. “This meshes with the ECU strategic goal of enhancing economic development throughout the region and supporting our industry partners, such as Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point and others, who have a growing demand for graduates with this unique skill set. It will help our students get jobs immediately after graduation and boosts industry at the same time. It’s a win-win situation.”

Chris Holder, head of research and engineering at the In-Service Support Center at MCAS Cherry Point, said each year high quality engineers, in particular mechanical and aerospace engineers are needed and recruited. Creating a mechanical engineering concentration at ECU strengthens the caliber of employee for industry to hire after graduation, he said.

“Personally, I want to be able to get the best engineers here at my facility that are going to stay in eastern North Carolina, that have roots and reason to be here,” said Holder, who also chairs the ECU Engineering Advisory Board.

“If I’ve got to go to Virginia and I’ve got to go to all the schools in North Carolina, then the engineers I can’t find here I’ve got to go to Florida and Michigan, I’m spending a lot of money recruiting folks that may stay for three, four, or five years and then go somewhere else. It’s in all of our best interest to see ECU succeed and having a mechanical engineering concentration is a promising step.”

ECU’s engineering program offers tremendous advantages including small class sizes, emphasis on faculty-student interaction, advanced laboratory experiences, and the opportunity to work on industry projects such as the capstone projects. As a result, the ECU engineering freshmen class has continued to grow each year. The initial engineering class in 2004 was 41 students with a large percentage of those students residing in central and eastern North Carolina. For the fall 2009 semester, applications were submitted from throughout N.C., the Northeastern U.S. and as far west as Colorado with 153 students set to start classes Aug. 25.

For more information on the ECU Department of Engineering, please go to www.tecs.ecu.edu/engineering or contact Dr. Paul Kauffmann, chair ECU Department of Engineering at (252) 328-9645.