Dart Day of Innovation and Creativity attracts hundreds to Design Day

It was a 6 a.m. start on Friday, Dec. 11, for the 83 students from the Kalamazoo Area Mathematics and Science Center (KAMSC) participating in Design Day in the MSU College of Engineering. They were among the 200 high school students making up one of the largest gatherings of K-12 participants at the Dart Day of Innovation and Creativity at MSU's Design Day.

Rebecca Joyce, student advocate at KAMSC, said the early start was worth it.

“It’s important for the students to see the application of what they see in the classroom,” Joyce said. “Design Day gives students a chance to see what it’s like to be on campus and to be more familiar with what engineering is. By the end of the day, they have broadened their scope related to engineering,” she added.

MSU Engineering hosted more than 200 high school students and 20 teachers for a day of hands-on engineering activity, design, and competitions during the Dart Day of Innovation and Creativity. Visiting students also had an opportunity to interact with current engineering students and vote on the dozens of innovative projects on display by Spartan Engineers.

East Lansing High School, Sexton High School in Lansing, Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center, and Westside Christian Academy-Detroit participated in the college's biggest day of the semester.

“We have witnessed a spike in interest in Design Day and in students enrolling at MSU in particular as engineering majors in recent years,” explained Drew Kim, assistant to the dean for recruitment, scholarship, and K-12 outreach in the MSU College of Engineering. “Studies have shown that students who engage in engineering hands-on activities
are more likely to pursue Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields in college.

“Experiences in robotics increase the number of students choosing engineering significantly,” Kim continued. “Additionally, creating the platform for high school students and teachers to view projects and vote for best projects helps them understand various types of engineering, and the scope of engineering innovation and creativity,” he added.

Randall Heck, a teacher and VEX Robotics coach at J.W. Sexton High School in Lansing, brought 25 students to Design Day. For Heck, it was a return visit to the College of Engineering.

“My engineering students have really enjoyed the activities at Design Day, and they like to see the facilities. One of the biggest draws of the day is lunch at Brody,” he noted.

Brody is MSU’s recently redesigned and rebuilt cafeteria that is among the country’s largest food facilities for college-aged students.

“Visiting Brody is a great opportunity to show them what college looks like,” Heck added.

Joyce noted there are a lot of really sharp minds among high school students these days.

“Frankly, I look to these students to solve a lot of today’s problems,” she said.

Among the Design Day participants were a group of 30 prospective female students, who were hosted by MSU’s Women in Engineering (WIE) staff – Teresa Isela VanderSloot, director for women in engineering recruitment and K-12 outreach, and her assistant director Geralynn Phelps, along with WIE student volunteers. The visiting students participated in the hands-on activities, then met with MSU engineering students for lunch at the International Center.
Kim said finding women students who are interested in pursuing a career in computer science or engineering is a priority for the college.

“We can certainly point to WIE involvement with Design Day as one of the factors that draws women students to Spartan Engineering,” Kim said. “Teresa, Geralynn, and the WIE volunteers did an outstanding job of recruiting and offering a special session for these incoming prospective women students.”

Design Day at MSU Engineering

More than 600 engineering students participated in and competed for 13 top awards during Design Day Friday, Dec. 11. Design Day is the culmination of the senior level capstone courses that are required for graduation from the College of Engineering. It showcases the outcomes of 15-week capstone courses, where students apply the knowledge and experiences gained during their engineering education at MSU. Working in teams of four or five, seniors put their best efforts into solving real-world problems for industry, non-profits, and government sponsors. Teams present on the last day of classes each semester. Design Day is in its 22nd year. It was initiated in 1994 by the Department of Mechanical Engineering.

Related Website: MSU Design Day
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