Drexel Women in Engineering
Celebrate 50 Years of Accomplishment

“In November, 1946, some 20 women engineering students at Drexel organized a society to promote friendship and to help each other with problems.”

“With these words, The Leased announced the formation of the Drexel chapter of the Society of Women Engineers (SWE).

On November 15, 1996, the University will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Drexel chapter with an all-day celebration.

Fifty years ago when Doris McNulty '57, a founding member of the Drexel chapter and now a retired Raytheon engineer, began her electrical engineering studies at Drexel, it was wartime. The majority of college-age men were in the armed services; Rosie the Riveter proclaimed her patriotism and industry in thousands of posters; and society was just beginning to appreciate that women could be successful at careers that had been all-male.

“My family believed in education for its women to make them self-sufficient. I liked math, and I wanted to follow in my father’s footsteps, who was a Navy engineer,” McNulty says.

She never experienced any discouragement or discrimination in high school or at Drexel as she pursued her engineering studies. Still, only some 15 to 18 women, by McNulty’s estimate, studied engineering with her throughout the years she attended day and evening classes at the University.

After earning her Drexel degree, McNulty worked for United Engineers for 34 years during which she says she experienced “steady upward movement in salary and responsibility.” When she retired from the firm in 1992, she was a consulting electrical engineer for the power industry.

For Karen Jehanian '82, vice president at Urban Engineers, her experiences as a woman engineer are strikingly similar. Her father is a contractor, and as a young girl she and her mother would often lunch with her uncle, then an engineer at Urban Engineers. She liked math and science and by seventh grade was already leaning toward a career in architecture or civil engineering.

“I applied to Drexel and Widener, but the co-op program decided me on Drexel. My parents were very happy because co-op paid for all my expenses, and the professional experience helped me get a job after graduation and at a higher salary than graduates from other colleges.”

At Drexel and as a professional engineer, Jehanian has never experienced difficulties because of her gender. At Drexel, there were seven women among the 67 civil engineering students.

“The guys actually looked out for us,” she remembers, “but of course, we were helping them with their homework.”

Jehanian believes women may be particularly well-suited for a career in her field—traffic and transportation engineering—because it demands excellent communication skills and the ability to make public presentations. Although analytical abilities are extremely important, written and verbal skills figure prominently, areas in which women typically excel.

Maria Pologruto '94, an environmental engineer at Pennoni Associates, Inc., chose engineering as a career because, “I wanted to make a difference by doing something both challenging and rewarding.”

Her father is an electrician, and as a child, Pologruto admired his ability to repair and design things.

“Once I decided I wanted to be an engineer, I knew I would go to Drexel. It has a great reputation; it was the first university to incorporate computers into the curriculum; and the co-op program provides a strong practical background.”

Pologruto’s desire to make a difference led her to civil engineering and eventually to a concentration in environmental and water resources engineering. As a Drexel co-op she worked for a New Jersey consulting engineering firm and later for a drilling contractor.

“Being a woman never held me back. I often assisted the drillers on-site,” she says.

At Pennoni Associates, Pologruto focuses on three areas: soil and ground water investigations; hydrologic and hydraulic studies; and environmental permitting.

As the experiences of these three women engineers demonstrate, the desire to enter engineering as a career is most often founded on an early interest in math and science.

Alyson Valentine, Drexel’s Women in Engineering Coordinator, stresses the importance of offering young girls opportunities in science and engineering early in their academic careers to reinforce their interests.

“Only eight percent of the nation’s engineers are women. Drexel hopes to increase that number by introducing middle and high school girls to careers in science and engineering through several programs,” Valentine says.

Drexel’s Women in Engineering provides three types of opportunities to young women. The GOES (Girls’ Opportunities in Engineering and Science) project, funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation, introduces middle school girls to science and engineering with in-school hands-on experiments conducted with Drexel women engineering faculty and students. Career Days bring high school girls to campus for activities in the University’s laboratories; and SEED (Summer Engineering Experiences at Drexel) provides a week-long on-campus program for high school girls with hands-on experiences in engineering fields.
A Sampling of the College of Engineering's Outstanding Alumni

Dr. Linda M. Abriola, '76
Associate Professor,
University of Michigan

Dr. Lucile Adams-Campbell '77
Associate Professor,
Howard University

Joyce M. Alkinson '81
Senior Data Analyst,
SmithKline Beecham Corp.

Geraldine Cox '66, '67, '70
Chairman, Ampotech

Meredith Earley '81
Crude Oil Trader,
Sun Refining & Marketing

Alma Kuppersinger Ferman '49
Director Computer Services,
Temple University (retired)

Christine T. Hunt '89
President,
Hunt Engineering Company

Dr. Geraldine J. Knowles '82
Principal Industrial Hygienist,
Solar Turbines Inc.

Susan Kohlman '85
Senior Materials Engineer,
Raytheon

Dolores Klinko Lenci '81
Senior Mechanical Designer,
Unisys Corporation

Joanna E. McCrean '81
President, Legend Industries, Inc.

Ann M. McNally '67
Vice President, FCC National Bank

Pamela C. Meitner '73
Environmental Attorney,
E.I. DuPont de Nemours

Patricia C. Mitchell '82
Owner, The Structures Group

Mary Lou Mooney '81
Manager, Cordes Corporation

Dr. Theresa K. Reilly, M.D. '73
Ophthalmologist

Debra Shapiro-Ross '77
Manager, Site Master
Planning, BASF

Anne L. Stevens '80
Plant Manager,
Ford Motor Company

Lisa Walton '94
Engineers Club 1996 Young Engineer of the Year,
Raytheon Engineers

Arntise M. Yurta, '81
Manager, Hughes Aircraft

on lab work and visits to industry sites.

Dr. Bantu Onaral, professor of electrical and computer engineering, views these
programs as a way to make young women aware of opportunities in engineering and to encourage
them to take college-track math and science courses.

"Today, for women engineers opportunities seem within
reach. With sufficient predisposition, exposure, preparation,
self-confidence and motivation, plus a fair amount of luck,
women engineers can afford to have regular goals and
aspirations as women and still enter and hold onto a
fulfilling engineering career," Onaral says.

"The majority of us,
however, recognize with
respect and gratitude the
perseverance, resourcefulness,
patience, and at times, sweat
and tears of the women
scientists and engineers of
the pre-1960s in paving the
way for us."

The Drexel-led Gateway
Coalition of 10 universities,
sponsored by the National
Science Foundation, is also
involved in activities to
courage women to enter
engineering.

Dr. Y. T. Shah, Dean of the
College of Engineering, says
the University is firmly committed
to increasing the number of
women engineering students.

"Nationally, Drexel ranks
among the top 15 percent of
universities in the number of
engineering and science degrees
awarded to women. Since 1975,
we have graduated some 1,360
women engineers and currently
enroll another 351 women
students. We are actively
involved, and will continue to be,
in programs to encourage young women to pursue
engineering as a career."

Dr. Margaret Wheatley,
chair of the University's 50th
anniversary of Women
Engineers celebration, believes
the occasion offers an important
opportunity to evaluate the
history of women in engineering
and to plan for the future.
For more information about the
50th Anniversary Celebration of the Society of Women
Engineers at Drexel, November 15, contact Alyson Valentine,

Celebrate the 50th
Anniversary of SWE

Yes, I want to attend
Drexel's 50th Anniversary
SWE Celebration on
November 15. Please send
me registration materials.

I'd like to volunteer to help
with the celebration.

I'd like to volunteer for
Drexel's programs designed to
attract women to engineering
and science.

I'd like to support Drexel's
Women in Engineering programs
with the enclosed
tax-deductible contribution in
the amount of $.

My contribution will be
matched by my employer:

Please charge my gift of
$ to the following credit card:

Visa Mastercard

Card Number

Exp. Date

Signature

Name

Address

Telephone

Mail to:
Suzanne Rocheleau
College of Engineering
Drexel University
3141 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104

The University's Women in Engineering Program actively recruits young women for studies
in engineering and provides a variety of support for Drexel women engineering students.