Expertise At Work At Old Dominion's Enterprise Centers

Created to bring Old Dominion University engineering and technology expertise directly to the doors of private industry, the College of Engineering and Technology’s eight Enterprise Centers collaborate closely with the private sector. The centers provide assistance in such areas as workforce development, modeling and simulation, manufacturing, experimental aerodynamics, productivity improvement, information technology, project management, testing and evaluation, and lasers and materials.

Photo at right courtesy of Virginia Space Flight Center.
Photo below courtesy of Newport News Shipbuilding.
The Enterprise Centers are key ingredients in Dean William Swart’s strategy to create a new, more relevant engineering-education standard. Swart’s “four-by-four” model combines four years of traditional classroom and laboratory instruction with four years of industry-project experience. Once they leave Old Dominion, the college’s graduating engineers and technologists are able to hit the ground running, immediately contributing to a company’s bottom line.

“Through a systematic marketing effort, we actively seek companies with problems,” Swart explains. “This effort includes attending industry fairs, holding our annual ‘Technology Solutions’ event on campus and taking referrals from state and local agencies such as Virginia’s Center for Innovative Technology and the Hampton Roads Technology Council.”

According to Swart, engaging the Enterprise Centers in practical problem-solving “is a win-win situation for everyone.” Companies win, he says, by improved industry efficiency, effectiveness and resultant profitability. The University wins by being able to offer an engineering and technology education which leverages its own (and, by association, the Hampton Roads region’s) unique advantages and resources. Upon graduation, students win by presenting employers a superior portfolio of academic and on-the-job achievement. And professors are able to combine real-world case studies and the lessons learned therefrom directly into curricula.

Swart believes the integration of education, research, development and training underscores the University’s value to the community, particularly regarding Old Dominion’s role as a catalyst for economic development. “The overall winner is the community, which gains additional high-tech jobs,” he contends. “Greater pay translates to increased quality of life, increased competitiveness in the global market, and last, but not least, a better trained workforce.”

Three of the University’s Enterprise Centers — the Center for Advanced Ship Repair and Maintenance, the Technology Applications Center and Virginia Space Flight Center — are featured in this issue of Quest. Brief summaries of each of the eight centers can be found on the College of Engineering and Technology’s website, www.eng.odu.edu. For more information on any or all of the Enterprise Centers, call (757) 683-5505 or toll free at (877) 861-8665.