

Georgia Institute of Technology Women in Engineering Program A Model for Corporate Engagement

Mahera Philobos, Ph.D.
Sandra Song Hayes

The Women in Engineering (WIE) Program at Georgia Tech has enjoyed a history of steady growth, fueled in large part by the increasing level of corporate support. The program, which began nearly 15 years ago, with sole support from the College of Engineering's Dean's Office has evolved to its current level of operation, which includes a network of 24 corporate partners, supporting the Women in Engineering programs at a level of over \$200,000 annually.

The successful corporate partnerships WIE has cultivated over the years stems from its ability to tailor its relationships to the unique interests and concerns of each individual corporate partner. WIE has defined specific levels of corporate partnerships with specific benefits associated with each level. Within these broadly defined categories, WIE's corporate partners enjoy flexibility to define how their unique areas of interest can be expressed in the application of their corporate support.

The majority of WIE's partners dedicate a portion of their support to scholarships. In fact, nearly half of the total corporate support goes to scholarships to female engineering students who have earned the distinction of "high honors" by earning a cumulative grade point average of 3.35 or higher. As a testimony to the excellence and achievement of Georgia Tech's undergraduate female engineering students, last year, nearly 40% of this student group achieved this distinction. The companies define the parameters for the scholarships they sponsor—i.e., major, class, career goals, etc. Based on this, scholarship recipients are selected.

The benchmark event of the WIE program is its annual Excellence Awards Banquet, sponsored for the past ten years by Kimberly Clark Corporation. This semi formal event is to recognize and celebrate the undergraduate female engineers who have achieved an overall GPA of 3.35 or higher. Over 500 Institute leaders, faculty members and of course, corporate representatives attend this event. Representatives of each company sponsoring a scholarship are recognized in the program, and are given an opportunity to present the scholarships giving them great visibility to this enormous gathering.

In addition to this major event, corporate partners are recognized for their support of specific WIE programs; invited to address students at WIE events. Specialized access to students is also given to WIE partner level companies through the sponsorship of special events.

Many of the successful strategies and approaches to corporate engagement can be applied to other programs and will be discussed in this paper.

Partnership Structure

WIE offers industry several partnership options with specific benefits associated with each:

Partnership Category	Sponsorship Level	Number of Companies
WIE Partner	\$20,000 +	6
Platinum Member	\$10,000 - \$19,999	8
Gold Member	\$5,000 - \$9,999	3
Silver Member	\$2,500 - \$4,999	2
Bronze Member	\$1,500 - \$2,499	3

This partnership structure was developed to offer companies making the largest investment the highest level of visibility on campus, and the greatest access to the students. This structure is one that is followed by many academic and programmatic entities on campus, such as the School of Electrical Engineering's Industry Partnership Program, and the Office of Minority Education and Development's Corporate Partnership Program.

Benefit	Partner	Plat	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Representation at Banquet	x	x	x	x	x
Named scholarships	x	x	x	x	x
Company name on banquet program	x	x	x	x	x
Access to female honor students	x	x	x		
Dinner meeting with targeted students	x	x			
Speaking opportunities	x				
Seminar opportunities	x				
Mentoring opportunities	x	x			
Company logo on WIE publications	x				
Targeted access to GT student body	x				

WIE works closely with the Development staff at Georgia Tech. As companies come to campus seeking Institute-wide engagement, they routinely meet with various campus programs to determine how they wish to dedicate their funds. Once on board, corporate support is generally sustained because of their satisfaction with WIE program outcomes.

Often, students who graduate from Georgia Tech become our advocates, bringing their companies into contact with WIE based on their successful experiences with WIE programs.

Excellence Awards Banquet

Every spring, the WIE program hosts an Excellence Awards Banquet (EAB) to honor and recognize female undergraduate students with an overall GPA of 3.35 or higher, the threshold for "high honors" status. In 2009, over 600 female undergraduate engineering students, representing nearly 40% of the College of Engineering's female students qualified for this event. Every year, over 500 students, faculty members, Institute leaders, and of course, industry partners attend this event.

In many ways this banquet represents the heart and essence of WIE's corporate engagement. It has been sponsored by Kimberly-Clark Corporation for the past 10 years. Kimberly-Clark's corporate logo is displayed at the head of the ballroom in a large banner, to acknowledge this generous ongoing support. In addition to this, all of WIE's corporate partners are also showcased at the banquet in several ways:

They are listed, according to their membership level, on the banquet program

Representatives from each partner company are invited to attend the banquet. And are seated with their scholarship recipients, and other student in the major they recruit from

A representative from each partner company is given the opportunity to present their company's scholarship, with a professional photo opportunity

Some companies have made substantial donations to support a major WIE program—the M&M Peer Mentoring program. At the banquet, these companies are named sponsors of "Mentor of the Year" awards, which they present at the banquet. In 2008, WIE received its first endowment from StreetSmarts to support the mentoring program. The presence of these companies at the banquet offers them high visibility in an audience of Georgia Tech's top female engineering students, Industry leaders and world-class faculty members.

Targeted Student Access

WIE has access to a campus wide data base of all students which allows partner companies to access students through a sophisticated filter—they can be accessed according to gender, year in school, major, citizenship status, GPA, etc. Using this system allows companies to communicate regarding internship, co-op and other opportunities to an audience specifically suited to their interests and needs.

WIE offers its Partner level companies an opportunity to have an "Evening With. . ." event. The companies define the parameters regarding the students they wish to meet with, and WIE identifies and contacts the students, and makes all of the logistical arrangements for a dinner meeting on the Georgia Tech campus. These events have been well received by companies and students alike, offering an intimate setting for the companies to familiarize the students with their industry, and opportunities available to them.

Speaking and Seminar Opportunities

The WIE M&M (Mentor Mentee) program is a peer mentoring program available to all students, both male and female in all majors. In this program freshmen are matched with juniors, and sophomores with seniors in their major to form the core mentoring pair. Team leaders are selected for each major, who organize periodic major-specific activities. WIE's major corporate supporters of this program are invited every year to address the students at the orientation meeting, and at the year-end celebration.

The final level of this reverse pyramid program structure are campus wide seminars, organized and sponsored by WIE. Typically three events are offered each semester on topics ranging from time management, business etiquette and public speaking. WIE's corporate partners are often invited to participate in these seminars by serving on a panel, or conducting the seminar themselves.

There are typically nearly 400 students campus wide who participate in the M&M program, so this offers industry sponsors a great forum to share their knowledge and expertise, as well as to become visible to the larger student population.

Mentoring

The M&M peer mentoring program served as the foundation for a Professional Mentoring Program that WIE initiated in 2007. In this program, women's affinity groups that exist in partner companies are tapped for female engineers interested in serving as mentors to Georgia Tech's undergraduate engineering students. WIE currently has a world-wide network of approximately 30 mentors who are serving as mentors. This gives our partner companies a unique opportunity to foster one-on-one relationships with female engineering students, advising them on career choices, and facilitating the transition into the professional workforce.