Elizabeth “Betsy” Voigt, senior in mechanical engineering, has won a Fulbright Scholarship to study in Germany. After graduating from K-State in May, Voigt will attend Virginia Tech to work on a master's degree in mechanical engineering. Thanks to a dual degree program between Virginia Tech and the Technical University of Darmstadt in Darmstadt, Germany, she will be able to spend one year at each university and earn a master's degree from both schools. Voigt said she then plans to work toward her doctorate degree at Virginia Tech.

“I am absolutely thrilled that I’ve been awarded the Fulbright,” Voigt said. “The experience fits perfectly with my plans for the future. I hope to be able to work collaboratively with German researchers throughout my career, and this will give me the opportunity to develop contact with scientists working there and to hone my German language skills.”

Voigt, who studied abroad in 2007 at Germany’s Technical University of Braunschweig, said she thinks study abroad experiences are important for engineering students. “I believe that it’s very important for engineers to learn to work with and in other cultures, especially since our field is becoming more and more globalized,” she said. “I am honored that the Fulbright Commission has chosen me as a student ambassador to Germany, and I will do my absolute best to uphold the standards of the Fulbright program.”

Voigt has served as president of Tau Beta Pi, an engineering honor society; vice president of K-State’s chapter of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers; and secretary of Mentors for International Relations. She also participates in a percussion ensemble and studio and does honors research. Voigt has been a member of the K-State Orchestra, College Bowl competition, and served as a mentor for Mechanical Engineering 101.

She has been a Tau Beta Pi Scholar, Annette Kade Study Abroad Scholar, National Merit Scholar, and a K-State Presidential Scholar, as well as a member of Pi Tau Sigma, a mechanical engineering honor society, and Phi Kappa Phi and as a member of Pi Tau Sigma, a mechanical engineering honor society. Thanks to a dual degree program between Virginia Tech and the Technical University of Darmstadt in Darmstadt, Germany, she will be able to spend one year at each university and earn a master's degree from both schools.

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Donghai Wang, associ. professor of biological and agricultural engineering

Focus on research

Grain sorghum has been underused for industrial applications, especially for bioenergy, with little research conducted on performance of grain sorghum for ethanol, especially on sorghum biomass—stalks and leaves—for biofuel production. In the U.S., sorghum production ranks third among cereal crops after corn and wheat. More than 500 million bushels of grain sorghum were produced in 2007, on 7.7 million acres, and ethanol consumed about 15% of the U.S. sorghum crop last year. In addition, more than six million acres of forage sorghum are planted each year.

"Grain sorghum is a reasonable feedstock for ethanol and could make a larger contribution to the nation’s fuel ethanol requirements."

In general," Wang said, "the major barrier limiting industrial use of sorghum has been its relatively difficult enzymatic degradation in typical dry-grid ethanol production. The factors impacting ethanol yield for sorghum are not well understood compared to corn. Particularly, little information is available on performance of sorghum varieties for ethanol production. My research focuses on understanding key factors such as composition, chemical structure, and physical properties, which impact the bioprocessing of sorghum for biofuels. I believe that fully understanding the relationship among generic-structure-function- conversion may lead to significant breakthroughs for utilization of sorghum via improved bioprocessing."

Sorghum, Wang said, has a similar chemical composition to corn, with more than 70% starch content. Currently, the dry-grid ethanol fermentation method converts starch into glucose, then uses yeast to ferment glucose into ethanol. For sweet sorghum, the major chemical compositions are sucrose, fructose, and glucose, which can be directly fermented into ethanol by yeast. But technical challenges of using sweet sorghum for biofuels are its short period of harvesting for highest sugar content, and fast sugar degradation during storage.

For stovers—the stalks and leaves—the major chemical compositions are cellulose, hemicellulose, and lignin. Cellulose and hemicellulose can be converted into C6 and C5 sugars, and fermented into ethanol and other chemicals. Conversion of cellulosic biomass, such as sorghum biomass, into biofuels offers major economic, environmental, and strategic benefits. However, production of biofuels from cellulosic biomass faces significant low-conversion technical challenges.

Success will depend largely upon the physical and chemical properties of the sorghum biomass, processing methods, effective enzyme systems or catalysts, efficient fermentation microorganisms, and optimization of the processing conditions.

Wang has been actively conducting this research on the utilization of grain sorghum and sorghum biomass for more efficient production of biofuels as a part of the work being done through the Kansas State University Center for Sustainable Energy (CSE). Established in 2007 with a $750,000 K-State Targeted Excellence grant, CSE spans the work of the colleges of engineering, agriculture, and arts and sciences, with a focus on providing sustainable, renewable energy, while maintaining the environment and providing an adequate food supply.

"Kansas is the leading producer of sorghum with more than 40% annual production of total U.S. sorghum production."

"Utilization of sorghum biomass for biofuels offers a unique opportunity for Kansas. Research and development of biofuels from sorghum grains and sorghum biomass, as well as improvement of sorghum biomass quality through biotechnolog-
y, will continue to be important."

"My basic approach is that biofuels can reduce U.S. dependence on foreign energy supplies, reduce environmental pollution, and support our sustainable economic development. As an engineer at K-State, my goal is to develop enabling technologies for producing affordable biofuels from renewable resources to improve the environment and to sustain energy resources."

–by Mary Rankin
The group: four students and two engineering professors. The journey: March 12–24 to Ranikhet, India—immersion into the local culture. The task: return home to develop and design a conveyance system. The result: changed lives.

A brief summary of K-State’s Engineers Without Borders (EWB) first official group project, true, but certainly not the totality of the experience—not even close, as revealed by the travelers themselves.

“There’s no experience that can match up with traveling abroad to a country completely opposite your own, and sacrificing your ambitions and time to the people there,” said EWB member Rachel Bain, senior in architectural engineering. “For those who have never considered feeling like they can’t get away from home and live normally again, only to arrive home and find that they’ll never find a comfortable normality until they’re back on a plane headed across the globe . . . I wish that for each and every person.”

“I was able to travel halfway around the world and experience a new culture,” said Mark Hopkins, graduate student in electrical engineering. “There were things I saw that were amazing, but there were also things I saw that upset me. I think what sunk in the most was seeing firsthand the things that Grassroots India is doing. Here were two people that had devoted their lives to helping the people and the country. Some really hard work was being done. But I think most of it was the inspiration I got from them. Some real work done. But I think most of it was the inspiration I got from them.

The EWB group partnered with Grassroots India, a non-governmental organization that has been working in the rural areas surrounding the town of Ranikhet in Uttrakhand, a mountain state in northern India—immersion into the local culture.

“Village women transport cement for making roof tiles during off-season of fruit production, where the women make the jams lies about 140 vertical feet below the road where the jams must be carried to load onto trucks for delivery to the market. Currently, Culbertson said, “the women carry loads of jams, each weighing about 25 kg (55 pounds) on their heads up a steep flight of stairs to the trucks—a very physically demanding and time-consuming process—making up to 30 trips per day during the peak season. Grassroots has asked us to help design a conveyance system to help the women move the jams up to the road. We conducted a site assessment to get measurements of the spans and slopes across which the mechanism will have to carry loads.”

But, as fourth-year civil engineering student Paul Bruss explained, the project is actually just beginning. “This was only the first trip of what should be a really great ongoing relationship,” he said. “The primary purpose of this first trip was to acquaint ourselves with the Pan Himalayan Grassroots Development Foundation, as well as meet the people of the villages that we are going to work with. We went to first learn about the culture and the people.”

“Our next step is to start working on the design of our conveyance system,” Culbertson said. “We would love for other engineering students to join us at this stage, and we would especially appreciate the help of mechanical engineers.”

Typically, EWB project teams integrate students, faculty, and professional career mentors to ensure sound engineering over-sight. Faculty advisors with this group were Alok Bhandari, former K-State civil engineering professor now with Iowa State University, as the technical advisor to the regional program, and Anil Pahwa, current K-State electrical and computer engineering professor. Both are originally from India.

“Although I am from India, I saw and learned many new things on this trip,” Pahwa said. “I was amazed watching the women go up and down more than 150 steps with the heavy loads on their heads at an elevation of nearly 6500 feet. I was gasping for breath when I went up the steps without any load.”

“These women are very strong and resilient, which allows them to make so many trips in a day. They do this as an economic necessity, but I am sure it has an impact on their bodies. They asked me if we were going to build a conveyance system for them. They further said that such a system would really help them. Since the task is challenging, I couldn’t make a promise, but I told them that we will try our best.”

“Some key interests of two of the students: Hopkins said, “My emphasis as an electrical engineering student as an undergrad was power systems, and I’ve continued on with that in my master’s program. If we use electric motors to power the conveyance system, I’ll be able to help incorporate them into the design. Another project we’re looking into with Grassroots India is a solar-powered lantern. The majority of that project would be electrical design as well.”

“Without a doubt.”

“YES!!”

“Definitely.”

“All the students agreed the experience has impacted their future careers.”

“Architectural engineering’s hot topic right now is green building,” Bain said. “LEED accreditation for sustainability of designs is a minimum when it comes to designing projects like this for people whose lives would dramatically benefit from saving money, time, and materials.

“I would like to some day end up doing humanitarian construction work for developing areas. EWB gives students a chance to start doing humanitarian and needed work locally and around the world, and I deeply appreciate the opportunity to be active and truly make a difference while I’m a student.”

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“Water is a key interest of two of the students. Culbertson said, “While the actual project itself is outside of my major, many of the things that Grassroots India is doing in the region are right up my alley, including basic sanitation and drinking water projects, and sustainable agriculture.”

“This project has more focus at this time,” Bruss said, “on electrical and mechanical engineering studies, but since the time I spent in India has actually begun to re-shape the direction of my studies. I am still deciding what field of civil engineering I want to work in after college. Since the
Clockwise from below: Retired faculty and guests enjoy reception in Fiedler Library; Mario Brothers’ character from EECE skit; visitors sport hard hats from WESP displays; high school students compete in CE’s balsa bridge-building event.

2008 OPEN HOUSE AWARDS

Outstanding department—ARE
Yellow Brick—CHE
Freshman/sophomore display—ARE
Curriculum display—ARE
Limited class display—ARE
Technical class display—CNS
Open class display—ARE

St. Pat—Jeremy Dreiling, ARE
St. Patricia—Kaylee Cocke, CHE

ENGINEERING BANQUET AWARDS

W. Leroy Culbertson/Steel Ring Leadership Scholarship—Ashley Clark, BAE

Clair A. Mauch/Steel Ring Adviser of the Year—Kimberly Douglas, director, Women in Engineering and Science Program (WESP)

Clockwise from top left: Natasha Del Rosario, Steel Ring vice president; CHE skit participants win Yellow Brick award; Dean John English cutting the ribbon to kick off Open House; students at IMSE shuffleboard display; WESP and BAE activity table.

Today’s Ideas, Tomorrow’s Reality

Clockwise from below: Retired faculty and guests enjoy reception in Fiedler Library; Mario Brothers’ character from EECE skit; visitors sport hard hats from WESP displays; high school students compete in CE’s balsa bridge-building event.

Upper right, clockwise: St. Patricia, Kaylee Cocke and St. Pat, Jeremy Dreiling; parade entries, right to left, CE, ARE, and MNE.

College of Engineering

April 18–19, 2008
Morris named DSA

Stephen R. Morris, president of the Kansas Senate, received the 2008 College of Engineering Distinguished Service Award at graduation ceremonies May 17. He also delivered the commencement address for the class of 2008.

Morris has served as president of the Kansas State University Alumni Association Board of Directors and as a committee member of the K-State Essential Edge National Steering Committee and National Policy Committee. He completed a degree in agricultural economics from K-State in 1968. He graduated from the U.S. Air Force Undergraduate Pilot Training and saw active duty as a pilot in Viet Nam, earning U.S. Air Force Air Medals for combat missions flown in 1971 and 1973. An Air Force Reserve pilot, now retired, Morris also was Liaison Officer for the U.S. Air Force Academy.

Recently Morris was awarded the 2007 Charles Dick Medal of Merit by the National Guard Association of the United States and the National Guard Association of Kansas Legislative Support Award for 2005–2006. He and his wife, Barb, have three daughters and eight grandchildren. They operate a wheat and grain sorghum farm operation at Hugoton.

2008 Alumni Fellow

Doug Sterbenz was named the 2008 College of Engineer ing Alumni Fellow in recognition of his distinguished career. He is executive vice president and chief operating officer for Westar Energy—the largest electric provider in Kansas. Sterbenz received a B.S. in mechanical engineering from Kansas State in 1985, later completing an M.B.A. from the University of Texas in Tyler. He began his career as an engineer with the Texas Utilities Co. He moved into supervision and held many leadership positions in various power plants before entering the field of power marketing with Questar Energy Trading. He joined Westar Energy in that capacity before becoming senior vice president, then chief operating officer in 2007.

“It was one of the high points of this spring semester to have Doug Sterbenz as our guest on campus, meeting with students and faculty,” said John English, dean of the College of Engineering. “His career achievements and professional accomplishments make him an outstanding choice for Alumni Fellow.” Sterbenz is a graduate of Leadership Topeka, serves on the board of directors for the Kansas Capital Area American Red Cross, and is an EEE Energy Supply Executive Advisory Board member.

Coonrod & Associates—Company of the Year

April 24. Randall R. Coonrod, a 1974 K-State graduate in civil engineering, president, project manager/estimator of Coonrod & Associates Construction Co., Inc., Wichita, was named 2008 Leader of the Year. Coonrod has managed the company, which exceeds $60 million in volume annually, as CEO since 1984.

Coonrod & Associates was founded in 1984 and has earned the reputation as one of the premier construction firms in the Midwest. The company has built in Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma with projects ranging in size from $500,000 to $30,000,000, including office buildings, hospitals, schools, water storage reservoirs, fuel and storage facilities, airport hangars, sports complexes, warehouses, correctional institutions, and industrial facilities.

Coonrod began his career in the construction business in 1974, joining Coonrod & Wals Construction Co., Inc., as secretary/treasurer and project manager/estimator, becoming senior vice president in 1980. Active in government and professional organizations, he is a member of the Wichita Chamber of Commerce, Wichita Crime Commission, Sedgwick County Board of Building Examiners and Appraisers, thekBRE Branch YMCA Advisory Board of Directors, District of Kansas Building and Industry Work Comp Fund, Sedgwick County Fire Code Board of Appeals, City of Wichita Board of Zoning Appeals, and the Kansas Junior Livestock Association.

He is also the principal manager and director of the Coonrod Family Foundation. In his association with K-State, Coonrod is a member of the Presidents Club, Ahearn Scholarship Club, Athletic Director’s Club, the College of Engineering Advisory Council, and the Foundation Board of Trustees. He was inducted into the College of Engineering Hall of Fame in 2002 and the K-State Army ROTC Hall of Fame in 2000.

He and his wife, Jackie, have four children.

Faculty scholarships

Funds have recently been established to honor the service of two College of Engineering faculty members. Contributions can be made to either through the Kansas State University Foundation. As a part of the Civil Engineering Centennial Banquet, April 18, the Civil Engineering Alumni Professors Honoring Dr. Robert Snell was officially announced. Snell served as head of the department of civil engineering from 1972–1992. He was named the engineering Professor of the Year in 1986, is an inductee of the K-State College of Engineering Hall of Fame, and a member of the Seaton Society. He retired in May 1999 after more than 40 years of service to K-State. He and his wife, Lila, have established the Robert R. and Lila L. Snell Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award and the Chi Epsilon Civil Engineering Undergraduate Teaching Award.

This will establish the first professorship solely for civil engineering faculty and will help ensure the future success of the department by supporting deserving faculty members, their research, and their students. Each recipient will represent excellence in education, community service, and philanthropy.

Noteworthy

Robert Snell

40 years of service to K-State. He and his wife, Lila, have established the Robert R. and Lila L. Snell Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award and the Chi Epsilon Civil Engineering Undergraduate Teaching Award.

L. T. Fan

Engineering curriculum, all at Kansas State. He has authored or coauthored seven books and several hundred refereed journal articles. Fan is credited with 17 patents and has been honored numerous times with national and international awards.

Elizabeth Unger

Women in Computing Science and Engineering Scholarship Fund has been established to pay tribute to Elizabeth Unger’s valuable contributions to Kansas State University. At K-State, Unger served as associated director of the computer center from 1966–1974 and has been a professor of computer science at the department of computer science since her retirement in 1999. She was the associate dean of the graduate school from 1990–1994 and has served as provost for Academica Services and Technology and dean of Continuing Education since then. She stepped down from those posts June 30, 2007. After a brief sabbatical, Unger will return to campus to research the impact of technology on teaching and learning.

50 years of service

A dinner honoring L. T. Fan, chemical engineering professor, for his 50 years at K-State was held in the Landon Room on the Holiday Inn at the Campus March 30. Mary Rezac, department head of chemical engineering, presented a gift to Fan and his wife, Eva. K-State Provost Duane Nellis congratulated chemical engineering faculty members Larry Glasgow,Keith Hohn, and Ben Kyle, each made brief remarks. Fan met Eva shortly after arriving at K-State, marrying her at the end of the semester. He has been a faculty member at K-State since 1958, giving him not only a career but also a wife. A native of Taiwan, Fan joined the chemical engineering faculty at K-State in 1958 as an instructor. He became a full professor in 1963, served as department head for 30 years beginning in 1968, and was appointed University Distinguished Professor in 1984. He also holds the Mark H. and Margaret H. Hulings Chair in Engineering and
Emily Voigt

Fellows are expected to become knowledge experts who can contribute significantly to research, teaching, and innovations in science and engineering. Voigt plans to enroll in a Ph.D. program in chemical and biological engineering next fall at the University of Wisconsin, using the NSF Fellowship there, as well as to have the same graduate awards she received in 2010, the Phi Kappa Phi Fellowship and the National Defense Science and Engineering Fellowship.

“Is it an honor to be chosen as an NSF Graduate Fellow,” Voigt said. “It will give me great flexibility in selecting a research project and advisor of my own choosing, without having to depend on outside research grants for funding. I am very grateful to be offered these advantages.”

As a K-State, Voigt has done research in biofuels production under Keith Hohn and John Stuhl, chemical engineering professors. Last summer, she conducted research at the University of Karlsruhe, Germany on production of recombinant erythropoietin in moss cells. Voigt conducted undergraduate research at Pennsylvania State University on transgenic protein production in plant cells in summer 2005 and in 2006 on algal biofuels. She has been the editor and cataloguer for Tau Beta Pi, an engineering honor society, and secretary and public relations coordinator for Mentors for International Experiences.

Voigt was a 2007 Goldwater Scholar, a Clare Boothe Luce Scholar in 2005, and has been a Summit Scholar. She received a McDonald’s Restaurant KRE scholarship, the Gordon and Joyce Goering Engineering Scholarship, a K-State Alumni Association license plate scholarship, Phillips Petroleum Company Chemical Engineering Scholarship, and the Steyer Chemical Engineering Scholarship.

She studied abroad in Giessen, Germany, during summer 2006 and is a member of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, Engineering Ambassadors, Society of Women Engineers, The Navigators, and Golden Key national honoraries.

Long Wins Udall

Nicholas Long, K-State senior in architectural engineering, is one of 80 students nationwide chosen to receive a $5,000 Morris K. Udall Scholarship. The Udall is a congressional scholarship that honors former Arizona congressman Morris Udall for his legacy of public service. Long has served as president of the K-State chapter of the National Society of Professional Engineers, is an executive officer of the College of Engineering Ambassadors, and has been an Engineering Telefund coach. He is a member of Tau Beta Pi, engineering honorary; Phi Alpha Epsilon, architectural engineering honorary; Chimes, junior leadership and service honorary; and Quest, engineering honorary; and has been an Engineering Telefund coach. He is a member of Tau Beta Pi Underclassman of the Year, 2004–2005. Long was named Tau Beta Pi Underclassman of the Year, 2004–2005.

Keith Thayer (ME) recently served as a regional judge in the 2008 FIRST Robotics Competition in Kansas City. He retired from CDI Stubbs-Overbeck Engineering in 1996 and now specializes in consulting engineering, mediation, and arbitration. He is a past president of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers Internationally and has judged FIRST regional and championship tournaments since 1997.

Way Ku (EE, M.S., Ph.D. ’81) has accepted the position as president of the City University of Hong Kong. He will assume his duties in May, leaving his former position of University Distinguished Professor and Dean of the College of Engineering at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville."
Setting a record and topping last year’s numbers, student callers from the College of Engineering had a highly successful Telefund run in early February. With participation of 232 callers, the group garnered pledges of $284,126, bettering the 2007 mark by more than $20,000. Students volunteers also set a single-session record of $87,361. “I’d like to thank all the faculty and staff who stopped by to support the student callers,” said John English, dean of engineering. “Having one of their professors or an administrator stop by goes a long way in thanking the students for their efforts and also highlights the importance of the event.”

Exceeding its $75 million goal, the College of Engineering raised $90,002,523.

Summary:
- $3,118,452 for facility enhancements/additions
- $12,527,179 for faculty enhancements
- $32,532,073 for student success
- $41,175,718 for excellence funds
- $552,021 for program enhancements
- $97,080 yet to be designated
- 1,178 donors made their first gift to K-State and designated it to the College of Engineering
- 143 scholarships established
- 13 Faculty of Distinction funds established
- 2 facility projects completed—Durland/Rathbone Hall renovations

Thank you!