

Engineering Students Attend International Summit

Engineers Without Borders on UN Sustainable Development Goals

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Engineering students and members of Engineers Without Borders, including Nathan Verrill (right), had the opportunity to meet Hunter Lovins during the summit. Lovins, author and president of Natural Capitalist Solutions, was the keynote speaker for the event.

By: Sarah Brockett

In March 2016, Andrews' students involved in the University's chapter of Engineers Without Borders (EWB) attended the organization's international summit in Denver, Colorado. EWB is a nonprofit organization that works with community-driven development programs worldwide in order to create and complete sustainable engineering projects.

2013 was the first year that Andrews' EWB chapter truly became active. Due to the chapter's heightened profile on campus and the resulting growing list of members, it was able to attend this annual event.

"As an Andrews University student, and a follower of Christ, I have a responsibility to share my skills and resources with those who do not have the same opportunities," says Nathan Verrill, president of the EWB Andrews chapter and junior electrical engineering major.

Along with showcasing topics centered around the United Nations' Sustainable Development goals, the weekend focused on tackling problems and finding ways to solve issues in relation to climate change, global access to clean water, gender equality, preservation of energy and more.

The summit also featured a screening of the award-winning documentary, "Poverty, Inc.," which addresses issues of sending aid to other countries, asking whether or not current methods are really the best way to help.

A lot of high-level thought topics and a few hands-on workshops were included near the end of the summit, providing information on how to implement certain kinds of projects, manage finances and cultural aspects and more.

“The EWB event made me realize the need for engineers in poorer communities,” says Andrew Gagi, freshman electrical and computer engineering major. “It exposed me to the people who have world-changing ideas that we can contribute to. This experience encouraged me to strive to be involved with meaningful projects, and to find some that we can do through our school.”

The summit’s keynote speaker was Hunter Lovins, author and promoter of sustainable development for over 40 years, president of Natural Capitalism Solutions, a 5013 non-profit located in Longmont, Colorado, and advisor for EWB-USA. During her presentation she quoted Lilla Watson, Aboriginal leader, activist and educator from Queensland, Australia.

“If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. If you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

Andrews University students met engineers from the University of Maryland, California Polytechnic State University and many more, including international EWB administrators from Nicaragua, several countries in Africa and more.

“I connected with organizers and students with the same mindset,” says Gagi. “It was inspiring and enlightening, and I’m so glad I was able to go.”

Members of the EWB Andrews chapter also met contacts from around Michigan, some being chapters and members which Phillip “TC” Coleman, sophomore mechanical engineering major, has crossed paths and worked with previously.

“The summit changed my perspective on how to help the community,” says Coleman. “Instead of merely serving my own altruistic motives, I now see the most important aspect of service is building a relationship with the community we desire to help.”

EWB is fully established on the Andrews University campus, with election procedures and bylaws. The organization still continues to welcome members, including non-engineers, as a variety of majors could be an asset to the technical project team. Particular needs for their current project are translator (Spanish/French), leadership, individuals with cultural and international studies experience, fundraising and even professional engineers interested in mentoring and supporting tomorrow’s engineers.

Currently the Andrews chapter of EWB is looking to team up with the community and the University’s international development program on future projects. They have already begun brainstorming ways to get involved locally, with hopes of dedicating time for engineering-related projects that would benefit the community around them.

As far as immediate plans, the Andrews chapter of EWB is planning to create a soapbox derby for the community to enjoy. Internationally, they have a good lead on a project in Madagascar that is currently in process at the paperwork level.

If you would like to support the [Andrews University chapter of Engineers Without Borders](#), either financially or with your particular skillset, contact the Department of Engineering & Computer Science at engineering@andrews.edu or 269-471-3420. You can also learn more online at andrews.edu/ecs.

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