



Luke McAfee

Graduation Date:	May 2010
Hometown:	Valparaiso, Indiana
ChE Co-Op Employer:	SABIC Innovative Plastics
Co-Op Program:	5-session

Why did you choose Purdue and to participate in the ChE Co-Op program?

Like most students beginning their senior year of high school, I began the stressful process of applying to colleges all over the country. Both of my parents attended Purdue so I was strongly encouraged to submit an application. I ended up earning several scholarships which put Purdue head and shoulders above the rest of my options as my number one college choice. After my first semester, I received a letter informing me that I was qualified for the cooperative education program. There was nothing to lose by attending a few info sessions and before I knew it I had five interviews set up, all with companies I would have loved to work for. I was shocked by the benefits offered by the companies with which I interviewed and ended up accepting an offer from General Electric Plastics (General Electric Plastics was sold to SABIC after my second term and renamed to SABIC Innovative Plastics).

What types of experience did you get as a ChE Co-Op with SABIC Innovative Plastics?

The core of SABIC Innovative Plastic's business is in commodity and cutting edge polycarbonate resins, pellets and sheet. All of my terms were spent working in Mt. Vernon, Indiana. Most Co-Ops begin their work experiences in what SABIC calls a "finishing" plant where resin powders are put through extruders with additives to form pellets with the qualities desired by their customers. In later terms, most chemical engineers move into chemical operations which may range anywhere from phenol production to Lexan® and Ultem® resin production facilities. The average Co-Op is immediately immersed into the business and given projects on par with those assigned to the full time engineers. Day to day responsibilities can include project management, process optimization or troubleshooting operations issues. In my experiences, I completed projects that saved the company millions of dollars, improved process safety and increased available production time.

What do you think are the benefits of participating in the ChE Co-Op program?

Over my five terms, I made about thirty percent over what the average chemical engineer would have made in their first year out of school; not to mention the fact that I was in a lower tax bracket and actually had money to fund everything I wanted to do in my college years. Also, SABIC provided a housing stipend which significantly reduced my housing costs while at work. With regard to work experience, a Co-Op with over 18 months of work experience will undoubtedly have more applicable experience than anyone who has had summer internships. Just ask any Co-Op who has attended Industrial Roundtable, companies will spend their time complimenting your experience rather than grilling you with intimidating questions. The Co-Op program also gives you breaks from Purdue's extremely challenging academic schedule. Overall, joining Purdue's Co-Op program was one of the best decisions I have made in my life and I would recommend it to anyone who is qualified.