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Drop and give me twenty! Leadership traits, that is



Students participate in a "boot camp" on leadership development skills and the Gordon Engineering Leadership Program. Photo by Mary Knox Merrill.

June 3, 2010

At a recent leadership "boot camp" for third- and fourth-year engineering students at Northeastern University, the participants were asked to list what characteristics define a leader. The answers included "good listener," "decisive," "multi-tasker," "adaptable," and "able to inspire."

It was the start of a larger conversation meant to expose students to leadership development concepts as they prepare for their next co-op experiences, but also to highlight the University's innovative **Gordon Engineering Leadership Program**.

Established in 2007 through a gift from the Gordon Foundation, the program offers early-career engineers a unique graduate-level track within the **College of Engineering** that aims to develop technically competent engineering leaders.

Students, known as Gordon Fellows, usually enter the intensive one-year program via an employer sponsorship. Employers benefit from the opportunity to gain leadership preparation for a promising engineer, and also from a critical program requirement: the successful completion of an engineering Challenge Project. The project must be market-worthy, technologically feasible and of significant importance to the fellow's employer.

The curriculum features two courses that broaden the knowledge base and leadership and technology development skills the students will need to create an achievable and demanding project plan. The Engineering Leadership course focuses on areas such as leadership qualities, product engineering, and market assessment, while the Scientific Foundations of Engineering course provides students with an understanding of how to evaluate new technologies.

The program also incorporates a strong mentoring component, in which fellows interact with professional engineering leaders.

Gordon Fellows earn a graduate certificate in engineering leadership and typically take courses to earn a master's degree in the engineering discipline of their choice. (Those who have already earned a graduate degree, however, only take the one-year certificate program.)

"The program equips aspiring engineering leaders with the ability to accelerate the development of their leadership skills in an engineering context," said Simon Pitts, the program director. "This is a win-win for the Gordon Fellows and their employers. At the end of the program, they are as effective in the delivery of products and technologies meeting performance, business and time to market goals as if they had been leading successful engineering projects for many years."

The boot camps are just one way that program leaders hope to raise awareness of leadership concepts and energize undergraduates to consider pursuing the visionary program. The second leadership boot camp is Friday, June 4. For more information on the leadership boot camp, contact Kristin Hicks at khicks@coe.neu.edu.

For more information on the Gordon Engineering Leadership program, visit <http://www.censsis.neu.edu/gordonfellows/index.php>.

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- March
- April
- May
- June
- July
- August
- September
- October
- November
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