

Interns REAL LIFE EXPERIENCE

Story by
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Three engineering students from Morgan State University recently completed a two-and-a-half-month intern program at the Europe District.

Raquel Reed, Darryl Richardson and Deshaun Thompson came from the Baltimore, Maryland university as participants in the Advancing Minorities Interest in Engineering program.

AMIE facilitates the recruitment of students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities throughout the United States.

“The selection process is worth going through because the benefits are pretty nice. Especially since you get to travel on weekends,” said Reed, a Baltimore native.

Reed said she can now brag about working for the one of the largest public engineering firms in the world, and being able to travel and live in Germany.

“It’s great to be exposed to a different culture that most people aren’t able to experience,” she said.

Richardson, who at 19 is the youngest in this group of AMIE interns, agreed. “I was able to see the German culture and travel around Germany, I thought that was pretty cool,” he said.

Richardson, already in his junior year, was glad he was able to shadow various engineers and observe the work they completed on a day-to-day basis.

“This experience helped me realize that construction management is the part of civil engineering I want to specialize in,” said

Richardson, who is currently studying industrial engineering.

He found the internship work “very positive,” and liked that civil engineering is such a huge field with many different paths.

Reed also referred to those different paths as an opportunity to see what civil engineering offers.

“I felt very privileged because EUD (Europe District) offers interns that chance to work alongside an organization that deals directly with large and small engineering projects. I was able to learn about the workings of the organization and what makes it work,” she said.

Reed also came to the district to learn about the different engineering programs that the Corps works with. However, her involvement in the program is rather unconventional — she is a minority within minority.

First, at the age of 32, Reed is a nontraditional student for many reasons, but most prevalently it is because she came back to school to advance her career. She readily admits she is the oldest intern ever accepted into the program, and she

Raquel Reed and Deshaun Thompson view the Europe District project board for updates. ▶



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Bill Sutherland



▲ **Michael Dennis, quality assurance representative, Europe District, and Deshaun Thompson an AMIE intern, talk about the electrical socket placement in the restroom of a commissary being renovated in Wiesbaden, Germany.**

decided three years ago that she needed to go back to school to get a career with a steady paycheck, something her degree in cinematography wasn't doing for her.

"I needed a regular job to help pay my bills," she said.

Second, Reed is also a minority in the engineering field. According to a reference survey published in 2002 by the National Science Foundation on American engineering students, being a female in the engineering field is statistically uncommon, with only 18 percent of Americans enrolled in engineering programs being women. Of this total, only two percent are African American.

Reed said she looked for interesting internships every summer and said her original plan to go overseas "fell through." However, when AMIE offered her Germany she took it immediately.

The program calls for each intern to learn the responsibilities of an engineer in construction contracting and they were able to work on two projects, said Reed.

Learning the responsibilities of an engineer, as well as contracting processes, was also an opportunity for Thompson to see the different ways engineers do their work and how to work in a professional environment.

"It was new for me since I've never worked in an office before," he said. However, office etiquette wasn't the only experience he gained.

He also saw the differences in electrical engineering between what is taught at school and what he learned at Europe District.

"You learn how to light up a whole block, or one room and that deals more with power distribution than what I thought electronics would," Thompson said.

He said his time with the Europe District was a positive experience because he was able to pick up new ideas and familiarize himself with all the different phases of construction engineering.

One of the most interesting things for him was to meet with contractors at the district's contracting office and gauge how the staff conducted review meetings and discussed projects with contractors.

Thompson felt his experiences at the Europe District were positive and provided him real world experiences he will be able to use.

AMIE helped open new avenues so each of the interns could gain valuable experiences towards their degrees.

Thompson also gained valuable experience in the partnership. This fall he entered his senior year and is studying electrical engineering. Thompson said he was able to rely on the district's history of mentoring.

"The partnership took place in 1995, first with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Europe District, allowing interns to be later placed under an agreement a year later in Hawaii, Korea, Japan and Alaska," said Pat Burgess, an AMIE representative at Morgan State University.

"The Corps has invested in AMIE by inviting students for internships over the last 10 years and helping minorities to advance their careers in the field of engineering. We think the business strategy is simple – build a proactive approach to foster diversity," said Burgess.

AMIE is also partnered with other American corporations such as Boeing, IBM and Lockheed Martin.

"The partnership is important and has been a success because the 10 AMIE schools produce 30 percent of the African-American engineers," said Burgess.

"We are thankful that EUD has been the most consistent employer and allowing students each year into the intern program. The personnel at Europe District have helped our interns immensely to enjoy a great experience and that's really awesome," she said.