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Alumni Spotlight: Ryan Shelby

Posted by John Hoyle in [Alumni](#) on Monday, July 19th, 2010 at 3:16 pm | [No Comments](#)



From small town to ASMS to Ph.D.

2002 grad Ryan Shelby grew up in Letohatchee, AL, and is a 4th-year Alfred P. Sloan Ph.D. Student Fellow in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at the University of California, Berkeley.

What were some first impressions of ASMS?

RS: When I started ASMS, I was blown away by the level of engagement inside and outside of classrooms amongst the professors, students, and the administration. Working with the professors and administrators, ASMSers are able to perform critical analyses and critique the underlying assumptions behind topics such as the role of government in technology development to the lessons of "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." I am so glad that ASMS provided an environment that really encourages students to be thinkers and leaders and not just mindless automatons that can recite facts and crunch numbers. Some of my best memories at ASMS include studying the "Deutsch: Na Klar!" book with friends for the oral exams by Frau Jones, getting introduced to Magic: The Gathering card game, and doing work study under Andretta Hopkins. However, the thing I enjoyed the most during my time at ASMS was being a student ambassador in the Office of Admissions with Derek Gandy, Pam Ware, and Peggy Partridge. Those three really allowed me to give back to the ASMS community by allowing me to help recruit new students to ASMS.

How did ASMS help prepare you for college?

RS: My experience and training at ASMS gave me better time-management skills, study skills, and analytical skills that I utilized to secure admission and a Level 1 Academic scholarship at Alabama A&M University. At AAMU, I majored in Mechanical Engineering with a concentration in propulsion systems. The engineering program is rather rigorous at AAMU, but the preparation I received at ASMS allowed me to be successful in my classes and my internships at NASA, the University of Michigan, and the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

How about graduate school?

RS: I have always had a passion for learning and tackling open-ended problems, so I decided to pursue my Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering from University of California, Berkeley. I finished at Alabama Agricultural & Mechanical University in 2006. Currently, I am a 4th year Alfred P. Sloan Ph.D. Student Fellow in the Department of Mechanical Engineering. My doctoral research involves design theory for sustainable product development and developing a Bayesian model and expert systems tool for predicting adoption rate of sustainable products under uncertainty. I envision that this model and tool will be utilized

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by engineers, scientists, and public policy makers to better design sustainability and renewable energy policies and technologies to meet the needs of targeted end user groups. I am also the co-founder and project manager for the Community Assessment of Renewable Energy and Sustainability (CARES), an engineering and sustainability assessment organization based at the UCB that works with communities to co-design and implement sustainability and renewable energy technologies and best practices.

What do you plan to do after grad school?

RS: I am interested in academia and energy policy, so I eventually want to teach at a university. However, CARES has been rather successful in our partnerships with Native American nations on designing and implementing culturally inspired, sustainable housing. We just won more seed funding to establish a center at UCB to continue our sustainability work. More than likely, I will be working with CARES after I graduate in 2011 for the next 3 years

Any final thought on ASMS?

RS: ASMS is in many ways a mini UC Berkeley: both schools provide a culture that fosters advanced learning, both schools encourage innovation amongst its students and faculty, and both schools provide students with the support they need to address challenges. ASMS provides an environment for the bright young minds in Alabama to grow and experiment with novel ideas and concepts early in their careers. As a result, students depart from ASMS with the mindset of innovators that can take on challenging problems.

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