Congratulations to the U.Va. Engineering School Graduating Class of 2011!

To our newest alumni!

Your keen intellect and hard work have earned you a degree that now opens more opportunities than you may now imagine.

U.Va. Engineering School graduates excel in many arenas. Your own true path may not be evident to you right now, yet success does await you.

Our SEAS alumni know that very well. Their exceptionally varied and practical education has allowed them to excel in a variety of endeavors.

To share some of their insights, we asked them to complete a survey, some results of which I here deliver to you.

In these summaries and selected responses, our alumni offer you many reasons for optimism as you walk the Lawn, and much wisdom, here presented in their own words.

With my personal congratulations …

James H. Aylor, Dean
U.Va. School of Engineering and Applied Science

2011 “Wisdom & Best Wishes” Survey

Almost a thousand SEAS alumni used their surveys to send you best wishes!
YOUR U.VA. SEAS EXPERIENCE MAKES YOU VALUABLE IN MANY DIFFERENT FIELDS …

Judging from those who responded to the 2011 Survey, you could find success in many arenas …

Of the “Engineers,” many shaped careers in disciplines from what they studied at U.Va.

The “Other” category ranges widely, including such fields as law, shipbuilding, intelligence, aviation, and intellectual property.

Survey responders about equally ended up in public sector, private sector, and higher education. About 2/3 work in the U.S. domestic market, 1/3 international, with about 1/3 in both.

THEIR PERSONAL SATISFACTION IS STRONG, AND MORE IMPORTANT …

While these salary ranges are quite general, you may find them promising. Survey responders ranged from fairly recent graduates to retirees.

WHERE ALUMNI THINK YOUR CAREER PROSPECTS ARE BEST …

Alumni overwhelmingly see strong career prospects for you – approaching “excellent” by all standards.

One reason alumni see such strong opportunities: The U.Va. Engineering School’s unique approach, rich in experiential learning in diverse fields, provides you with exceptional potential for entrepreneurship and innovation.
The survey asked alumni, “What do you consider the #1 reason for great career optimism right now?” From among the hundreds of very positive suggestions, here are a handful in their own words …

“You have so many reasons for optimism! The country is confronted with many challenges. Those people who can provide value added solutions to these challenges will be very successful. Engineers are uniquely qualified to analyze problems and develop solutions.”

Andrew Hook, Nuclear Engineering
Class of 1972

“The economy is rebounding. Organizations that laid off employees during the recession are not only hiring once again but promoting quickly as well. Take advantage.”

John W. Conover V, Mechanical Engineering
Class of 2007

“Your degree can be applied in countless ways that you probably haven’t even considered. Intangible skills and your analytical approach make you an excellent leadership candidate for tons of exciting projects. People are coming up with great ideas to improve our planet and engineers are vital to turning those ideas into realities.”

Carlos A. Valle, Computer Engineering
Class of 2008

“The #1 reason for career optimism right now is the education you have received at the Engineering School. You will be more prepared than most of your peers to tackle real-world problems in any setting. Do not be limited by conceptions of what an engineer typically does. You can do anything with an engineering degree. Be imaginative. Take risks. Go outside your comfort zone.”

Frank Riggs, Civil Engineering
Class of 2005

“We live and work in a creativity-based economy. Unlike the agriculture, manufacturing, and information economies of the past, today’s innovation cycle is moving at blinding speed. People -- smart passionate analytical people like SEAS graduates -- who can harness their creativity and technical skills to innovate new solutions, products, and business models will thrive from Day-1.”

Melton Littlepage, Electrical Engineering
Class of 1994
Our survey also asked alumni what they know now that they wish they knew the day they walked the Lawn. Again, a small sampling in their own words …

"I wish I had a better understanding of how broad my opportunities would be. Since then, I’ve learned to reach out beyond my profession and my immediate colleagues, and in the process I’ve discovered unexpected connections between my engineering management career and society as a whole. Your employers will not always make these connections for you. You must seek them out yourself."

Robert E. Lindberg Jr., MS, Engineering Physics  
Class of 1976

"You are not expected to know everything when you enter the work force. Do not be afraid to ask questions and find a mentor/advocate who you can trust and who will give you honest feedback and advice throughout your career. Choose your mentors wisely. Mentors aren’t always superiors, they come in various shapes and sizes. I have learned more from people who are lower in the corporate “totem pole” than I am than I have learned from executives and managers. There is no one in the work force from whom you cannot learn something. Be a sponge."

Meg C. Roughen, Civil Engineering  
Class of 2002

"Frequently it isn’t about how much you know or if you’re right about a problem; it’s all about how you go about communicating your position and managing your relationships."

Kevin J. Berger, Civil Engineering  
Class of 2000

"It has taken me longer than I thought to achieve some of my goals, but the hard work has indeed paid off. Don’t assume that knowledge of a subject will advance you, as knowledge is cheap. Understanding is gained through experience and failure, accept and learn from failure - you will thrive and surpass those around you. Always say “YES” to new opportunity. Embrace risk for maximum return."

Timothy Waters, Electrical Engineering  
BS, Class of 1996  
MS, Class of 1998

“Don’t wait for opportunities to find you, go out and create them for yourself. Never ever let anyone else put boundaries on your dreams and aspirations. Learn all you can about this magnificent world and remember that it is not just about what you do, it’s about how you do it and most importantly, it’s about who you are. Commit to making a positive difference in other people’s lives and have fun along the way!"

Nance K. Dicciani, MS, Chemical Engineering  
Class of 1970
“People want to know that you care (about them personally) before they care what you know. Humility, empathy, transparency will get you much further in your career and in life than being the “smartest” person in the meeting.”

Douglas D. R. Palmore, Mechanical Engineering
Class of 1991

“I wished I understood that you need to be flexible. You might not eventually do what you majored in at UVA and that may be frustrating but the things that you are taught and you gained at the University are broader and will enable you to succeed and thrive in any environment that you go into. Go into the future with confidence because your time at the University has given you the keys to success. Good Luck!”

Lt. Col. Stanley Stafira Jr., Aerospace Engineering
Class of 1988

“Understand the concepts, not the answers. There are many people and machines that can check your work, but it takes a logical, human mind to set up the problem correctly. Manputer will always win out over Computer.”

William VandeWater, Engineering Science
Class of 1973

“I think I was swayed a lot with what everyone else was doing. I’d say the one thing I wish someone told me was to do what you’re passionate about. Now, almost 5 years after graduation, I am doing just that and using my consulting experience in a tangible way to work in international development, with hopes of doing social entrepreneurship. Think hard about your passions and pursue them wholeheartedly!”

Nathaniel K. Wong, Systems Engineering
Class of 2006

“Every company can be described by the four P’s: processes, products, problems, and people. By far the most critical component is the last one; how you interact with people - all people, regardless of position or influence - will determine your success in your career and in your life.”

Gregory Bartlett, MS, Materials Science
Class of 1985

“The one thing I know now that I wish I had known when I walked the Lawn is that nothing can put you in a better position to succeed than having a sincere passion for what you are doing. Many graduates will struggle in jobs or situations that may seem lucrative relative to the means of a typical college student. However, those that really enjoy their careers and their friends and colleagues are those that are just plain excited everyday by what they do. The happiest folks are those that would do what they are doing everyday for free. Those folks don’t have jobs, they have livelihoods. And also, life is and always will be relative.”

Robert Wadsworth, Systems Engineering
Class of 1982
Now that you are joining our alumni …

The day you walk the Lawn, you advance to SEAS Alumni status! Those who have preceded you hope that their experience and insights help you in that transition, and as you move on to your unique success.

As a U.Va. Engineering School alum, you will receive opportunities to help those who follow you. When this happens, we hope you remember the “Wisdom & Best Wishes” from our alumni and that you give as generously as you today receive. With thanks!

Let’s stay in touch!

Your Engineering School would like to follow your own success story as it unfolds, and also keep you up to date with our events and achievements. That’s why we encourage you to go to http://www.seas.virginia.edu/, click on “Contact/Admin” and then “Send Us Your News.” You can then provide your current contact information and set yourself up to receive our E-News and Dean Aylor’s monthly email. Please go back whenever you want to share your news for our alumni publication, or to provide an update when you change street or email address.

Thanks and Congratulations!

“The skills and knowledge gained through my studies are applicable to technical fields and employment possibilities far broader than I could presume or anticipate.”

Virginia E. Hodge, MS, Biomedical Engineering
Class of 1979

“The ability to communicate to non-engineers is critical. The ability to explain complicated issues and receive support from decision makers is extremely important, especially in the public sector.”

Col. Wallace Mook, Civil Engineering
BS, Class of 1969
MS, Class of 1978