

From Professor Elzey, Director of the Rodman Scholars Program

Dedicated to the principle that ‘from those to whom great gifts are given, much is expected’, the Rodman Scholars at the University of Virginia seek to serve their community, both local and global, the University and the engineering profession. Through the Rodman Scholars Program, the School of Engineering and Applied Science is dedicated to helping exceptionally talented undergraduate students reach their full potential as engineering leaders. This dual purpose is served largely through a combination of proven curricular offerings, experiential learning opportunities, and the relative autonomy Scholars have to organize themselves, and to decide how they will leverage their own energy and talents and the support provided by the Engineering School.

The Rodman Scholars Program, founded in 1983, was named to honor Walter Sheldon Rodman, a revered engineering scholar and teacher, and Dean of the Engineering School from 1931 through 1946. From its beginning, the Rodman program has offered coursework and experiential learning during the first year to encourage and cultivate innovation

and leadership in engineering, and to develop a broader perspective on the role of the engineer. A first year residential program, in which Rodman and Echols (College of Arts and Sciences) Scholars share on-Grounds housing, serves to further cross-disciplinary perspective and shared opportunities to experience and shape University life. Evening seminars, on topics chosen by Scholars, and intended to provide informal learning opportunities, have also been a part of the program from its inception.

The current Rodman Scholars Program offers more than ever. A new international program, supported through a grant from Volkswagen Group of America, teams Scholars with engineering students from the Technical University of Braunschweig, Germany, during an intensive, two-week summer program. The program, known



Professor Elzey with current and former Rodman presidents, from L - R: Ian Czekala, Chris Belyea, Kelly Anderson, Professor Elzey, Manya Garg, Blair Stocks, and Michael Booth

as Global Ingenuity 21, uses the model of a ‘think tank’ to immerse participants in a cross-cultural engineering design challenge. Rodman Scholars have recently created an eminent speaker series, open to the entire University community, intended to highlight great engineering and its benefits to society. Scholars have provided funding for undergraduate research projects in sustainable engineering and are working with LEAP, a local non-profit, to provide free home energy audits and advice on improving home energy efficiency. These are just a few examples of the ways in which Rodman Scholars are engaging with the world of engineering and the life of the University.

Students selected for the Rodman Scholars Program are typically in the 99th percentile among all U.S. high school graduates. But while many Scholars are class valedictorians, or have published their own research, outstanding academic ability is only part of who they are; they are also driven to make a difference. Through passion, innovation and energy, those selected for the program have shown exceptional potential for leadership. It may have been the creation of a non-profit organization, service in leadership roles in academic, sports, or other organizations, or the inspiration of others to reach higher; either way, it is the use of knowledge, skills and energy, not merely their possession, that distinguishes the Rodman Scholar. As director, it is my privilege to work with those currently in the program, and one of my top priorities to reconnect with our alumni. If you are a Rodman Program alumnus, I invite you to get in touch by responding to one of our surveys, or by sending me an e-mail (elzey@virginia.edu) with your name and current mailing address.

Dana Elzey
Program Director, 2004-present