NSBE UH IS NUMBER ONE OUTSTANDING CHAPTER IN THE U.S.A.

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Sometimes you’re just born knowing what you want to do.

“In fourth grade I wrote a paper on being an architectural engineer, and I wasn’t quite sure if that really existed,” said Jameel Jordan, senior petroleum engineering student at the Cullen College and incoming president of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) at UH.

So now, to make sure fourth graders and others know exactly what engineering is, Jordan and his executive team of NSBE at UH conduct outreach programs, student mentoring sessions and other pre-college initiatives to introduce the heady concepts of engineering to youngsters.

“Our overall goal of national NSBE is to reach the graduation of 10,000 black engineers yearly by the year 2025,” said Jordan. “So, as a part of that, each chapter should be geared to helping achieve that goal and that’s where we come in.”

That advocacy for engineering caught the eye of the NSBE national board at the annual conference in Kansas, Mo. It’s one of the reasons national officials selected the UH group as Outstanding Chapter of the Year, chosen from more than 250 others. NSBE at UH sent 56 engineering Cougars to the convention, a large showing by any measure.

NSBE is one of the largest student-governed organizations based in the United States. Its mission is “to increase the number of culturally responsible Black Engineers who excel academically, succeed professionally and positively impact the community.” A quick review of its UH roster and you can see they are well on their way to completing that mission.

The dream executive team

Amira Spikes, membership chair for NSBE at UH, is the only Gates Millennium Scholar on the UH campus. Funded by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Gates Millennium Scholars program promotes
academic excellence, provides opportunities and reduces financial barriers for a select group of outstanding students of color.

Like Jordan, Spikes wanted to be an engineer since she was in elementary school. Also like Jordan, she wanted to be an architectural engineer, a job title she, too, thinks she might have made up.

I remember when I was in seventh or eighth grade people would say, That doesn?t even exist. But then others said engineering was a great field, said Spikes. In her early high school years in Denton, Texas, she attended an Upward Bound Math and Science camp and her goal gelled. Now she?s an environmental science and biology major.

It took Kayla Nash, a junior in civil engineering, only until her senior year of high school in Spring, Texas, to decide on engineering. Even though she went to a specialized career high school, she said she felt lost when she first came to UH until she joined NSBE.

This is definitely a family environment, said Nash. I remember when I first came in as a freshman, I didn?t know anybody. I just knew I wanted to get involved and everyone was welcoming and so I was able to find my mentor. Any time I had a question about anything a resume or a career fair people that had been through it before were able to help me.

None of them seemed to need family more than Nnamdi Emebo, a junior in petroleum engineering and NSBE UH treasurer, who left his parents in Nigeria to study here. In an effort to develop himself professionally, he joined NSBE at UH.

The more I got introduced to the members and the executive board I felt we became friends and they became my mentors who were actually guiding my path in school, said Emebo. He met Jordan through NSBE, and they became fast friends.

Now we?re like brothers. We study together and go everywhere together and it was through NSBE that we developed that brotherhood and true friendship, said Emebo.

Professional benefits, too

Nash credits her activity in the organization with scoring an internship with civil engineering firm Cobb, Fendley & Associates.

I know if it was not for NSBE I would not have gotten that internship, says Nash. I didn?t really know how to talk to professionals and I learned that all through NSBE?

Added Spikes, I like to think of NSBE as connecting your education to your professional life so you?ll be well rounded and prepared for your career. We bring professional engineers in to discuss what recruiters want to see from you and how you can best present yourself, even how to dress.


But not all members of NSBE at UH are ready yet to score the big job or internship. For the younger students or those that need extra tutoring, the chapter provides collaborative studying environments and study nights where anyone in need can learn from their peers. All of them say they have been through that period, where assistance is needed.

Jordan says it?s a comfortable environment that breeds success.

You know that feeling after a long day when you go home, that?s what NSBE feels like, said Jordan.
Home indeed. And recognized as one of the finest addresses in the U.S.

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