Cumulative Reflection

My four years at Iowa State have been some of the most rewarding years of my life. I have made a lot of lifelong friends, learned all kinds of new things, and have been very fortunate to see myself take numerous leadership positions throughout my time in Ames. I have also had great successes both academically, and professionally. There are not a lot of people that can say they had internships in their field all four years of college, and were able to secure a job before they started their senior year of college. I have worked hard for these opportunities, and I have been able to use a lot of what I learned at Iowa State to help me succeed in each one of those situations.

Iowa State has done a great job at taking a technical approach to all of its Electrical Engineering classes. The most beneficial parts of all my classes seem to be my labs as this is the chance I have to put all of the lecture info into practice. As we know, you learn best by doing. By combining the equations with the practical application, it gives you a much deeper understanding of how each thing works, as well as what you can expect as real world results compared to the theoretical calculations. Solving problems is at the core of being an engineer. A lot of the classes that we have had at Iowa State focus on applying math to a system. To put multiple things together such as EE 230 where we need to build different amplifier circuits using different Op-Amp setups along with capacitors and resistors. One particular class that I am taking, EE 388 has really shown me how engineering can have a global impact. The goal of the class is to better understand sustainable design, and this is something that is crucial in developing countries. How just because we use something like tractor here to farm does not mean that they also need tractors. A lot of the work they do is much smaller scale, and they do not have the ability to repair the tractor when it breaks down. For them, an Ox is a much more effective method of farming. That class has been an eye-opening experience for me, and I am glad that I found it as a tech-elective.

A lot of the classes that I have taken focus on the technical and engineering aspects of problems. With some labs and projects, we work as groups so that we can learn how to partition tasks and work together to write a lab report. This builds a lot of communication skills as it forces us to make sure everyone has a job, and that none of them are overlapping. We have seen a lot of ethical situation in a current class I am taking in ME 433. We talk a lot about how different energy sources affect the environment, and that not everything is as clean as it appears on the surface. It brings into question a lot of moral and ethical choices when choosing to build a power plant, or install a renewable source.

I have been very fortunate to have been a part of a lot of different organizations and groups on campus. One of the biggest is my fraternity. I have had amazing opportunities to develop my leadership skills- seeing the older members as a freshman, and then talking to them now after they have been in industry for a few years, it is obvious that you are not done learning when you graduate. There is still a ton left to learn. You can always work on being a better communicator, and you must learn to shift your leadership style to reflect the group that you are leading. Working as a peer mentor for the college of engineering, I have found that I am always learning. There have been numerous situations where I do not know the answer to a question one of the freshmen in my class asked. To solve this, I found myself contacting other resources on campus such as my advisor, faculty, and sometimes other students to answer a student’s question. I have come to really appreciate the saying “The smartest people in the world may not always know the answer, but they know where to find it.” In my opinion, this defines lifelong learning.

If I were to do my undergraduate years again, I think that the biggest thing I would change is the time I took to graduate, to have studied abroad, and to have found more classes that interest me so that I can further develop my interests. By decided right off the bat to graduate in four years, I limited myself on the courses I could take and any possible minors that may have been of interest to me. This meant that although I only need 6 more credits to get a French minor, I will fall short of that. It also means that I did not give myself as much of a chance to enjoy all of the experiences that I have had in the last three years. I wish I would have studied abroad as I have been told it is one of the more life changing opportunities any student can have. The chance to live for an entire semester in another country and completely immerse yourself in their culture give you a great perspective on how similar, and different they are to you. It also allows you to have a greater appreciation of the things that you take for granted at home. Lastly, I would have taken more fun classes that allow me to explore my other interests in life, and broaden my horizons. Although there are things that I would change, I have been very successful and enjoyed my time at Iowa State.