

Abstract

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The Olin College – Georgia Tech Lorraine undergraduate engineering education partnership

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The founders of the Olin College are pursuing an ambitious quest – that of setting a new paradigm for undergraduate engineering education. Olin College is doing so in creating an entirely new – green field – university: new campus, new faculty and, most important, a new approach to academic programs and even to their design.

The founders of Georgia Tech Lorraine had an equally ambitious goal in mind – that of setting a new paradigm for graduate engineering education. The overarching vision behind Georgia Tech's European platform is to educate the engineers emerging global enterprises will need to prosper.

Three cornerstones set the proposed Olin College curriculum aside throughout the four years of the programs: (a) strong and sustained focus on humanities and social sciences, (b) an awareness and sensitivity toward active engagement in the surrounding community, and (c) a deliberate emphasis on international education. The third of these curricular cornerstones provides the foundation for the Georgia Tech Lorraine – Olin College collaboration.

The paper describes the first actual enactment of this collaboration when the 30 students – partners – of Olin College spent four weeks at Georgia Tech Lorraine, in Metz, France, along with several Olin College faculty members and administrators. The main activities of the students are discussed: (a) French language coursework, (b) seminar series dealing with topics such as European education and research programs, governmental structures as well as the local economical, social, political and cultural environments, (c) interaction with the graduate students of an emblematic Franco-American research laboratory located at Georgia Tech Lorraine, and (d) collaboration with local enterprises.

The paper concludes with a discussion of the benefits which resulted from this collaboration between two very different corporate cultural environments and what future collaborative initiatives are envisioned.