
ACE Mentor Program Started My Budding Career as an Engineer

Program Offers Real-World Experience with Santa Barbara Professionals

Wednesday, October 17, 2018

By Eva Kilpper

I am standing on a riser next to a large screen in the middle of the Procore headquarters. I'm about to present my team project to a panel of architects, structural engineers, and construction managers, and my face won't stop twitching. This slideshow represents the culmination of a year's worth of work by my team and me. With dread, I realize I can only form one concrete thought: "How did I get myself into this situation?" But by the end, that dread was gone, and in its place was a feeling of accomplishment I'll never forget.

For two years now, I have been a part of the ACE Mentor Program, a national after-school program for high school students interested in the fields of architecture, construction, and engineering (ACE). The program matches students with ACE professionals, who show us where they work and what skills they need to accomplish their projects.

Sage Shingle, a structural engineer, launched the Santa Barbara chapter two years ago. He invited my class from the Providence Engineering Academy to attend an informational meeting, and I could tell from his enthusiasm that it was going to be a great experience. I encouraged my friend and classmate Victor to join, and we met once a week in different offices of the mentors. We also made on-site visits to explore design-build environments like MOXI.

The best part of ACE is you get the opportunity to design an actual project. This past year, we created a proposal for a memorial park and pavilion honoring the victims of the Montecito debris flow. Even though each project is conceptual, we consider it from all angles, including how much it will cost.

I learned a lot about different career options. By meeting in the offices of KBZ Architects, DD Ford, and Van Sande Structural Consultants, I've seen firsthand what a job in each of the fields might look like. Among others, Mat Gradias introduced me to the architectural world, and Katie Klein showed me how landscaping can completely transform a space. I am incredibly grateful to this group of professionals who volunteer their time to teach us. I hope to study mechanical engineering in college next year, if all goes according to plan.

After my presentation at Procore, I was approached with the opportunity to go to an ACE summer camp, where I spent a week in Colorado taking classes at CU Denver to design and build furniture. It was a fantastic experience that confirmed I am headed in the right direction. I look forward to starting my third year of ACE this October. Hopefully, students reading this article will consider joining me there!



Eva Kilpper

Paul Wellman

More like this story

- [Dos Pueblos Engineering Academy's D'Pengineers](#)
- [National Science Foundation Extends Funding for Nanotechnology Internship Program at UC Santa Barbara](#)
- [UCSB's Research Mentorship Program Gives High School Students a Summer Experience to Remember](#)
- [Mosher and Raytheon Support DP Engineering Academy](#)
- [Capturing Wild Animals, Teaching Your Peers](#)

To submit a comment on this article, email letters@independent.com or visit [our Facebook page](#). To submit information to a reporter, email tips@independent.com.