

I am currently an upcoming senior majoring in Electrical Engineering at the Pennsylvania State University. Academically, I take a very rigorous course load—completing a Bachelor of Science Electrical Engineering degree program in only three years. Opportunities outside of the classroom, specifically in teaching and performance, have allowed me to further my experience at the university. I have a strong passion in ending the gender gap in the electrical engineering field, as well as engineering as a whole. Overall, the breadth of experiences I have gained at Penn State have shaped my passions and how I see the world, in addition to preparing me to enter the workforce.

Beyond taking classes, I spend my time primarily in three widely-different extracurricular opportunities. I hold a part-time job on campus at Eisenhower Auditorium to help support myself financially. I am a member of the auditorium's event staff. As an event staff member, I worked in a variety of different positions from selling concessions at Broadway shows that come to campus to managing the School of Music concerts. I also worked in the events office, assisting the paperwork required to support such events. My second main extracurricular is participation on Penn State Dance Alliance's performance team. I've danced competitively since I was six years old, and continuing it in college has allowed for me to have a prime stress relief outlet as well as expand my love for the art. I have also been able to develop strong communication skills in a unique way, as I have choreographed and taught multiple routines to the team. Additionally, I am a member of two academic extracurriculars that have fostered my passion for electrical engineering and allowed me to share it with others. This past year I was inducted into Eta Kappa Nu—the national honor society for electrical engineering and computer science students—which requires tutoring in core electrical and computer engineering coursework, along with the traditional GPA requirement. Similarly, I participate in Penn State's organization for Undergraduate Teaching and Research Experiences in Engineering (UTREE). UTREE teaches introductory engineering students in public speaking and technical communication. How I spend my time outside of the classroom has made me a much more well-rounded individual and allowed me to foster my interests for teaching and performance.

I like to think that my academic career as well as my outside of the classroom interests separate me from the “typical” college student. Whether that is true or not, the passion that drives my interests and my future career goals is absolutely one that isn’t heard every day. When anyone thinks of an electrical engineer, they think of a nerdy boy in an ill-fitting suit, probably staring at a circuit. I’ve witnessed this stereotype first-hand in opinions from my family, close friends, and most prominently those nerdy boys sitting next to me in my classes. Just last semester one of my fellow classmates even assumed I was in the wrong classroom on the first day of lecture. This stereotype and biased behavior is discouraging young women from entering the field, and subsequently the world is losing potential great electrical engineers. Encouraging women to enter STEM, and specifically electrical engineering, is something I have developed such a passion for since I made my college major decision in my last year of high school. Currently I have spoken during my former high school physics class, supported women facilitated and attended engineering study groups, and I plan to spread this passion more and more as I am able to. From facing this obstacle in my college career, I have gone above and beyond what was expected of me—constantly working to prove I am an equal to some of the smartest boys within Penn State’s Electrical Engineering department. While I plan to do everything in my power to end this gender gap, I take solace in the fact that it has made me a better student, work harder, and develop a passion within me I didn’t know I had.

A hallmark of a Penn State education is that it creates such a solid foundation for success in the future. I have been challenged more, succeeded more, and experienced more than I ever thought I would—all made possible through my education at Penn State. The relationships I have built with my professors and classmates that have become friends will undoubtedly continue past graduation and have made such a difficult degree program feel like a blast. I’ve always loved school and classes, since I was little, but my Penn State education has allowed me to love the idea of a career and everything else that comes with the future after college. This education, above all else, has given me the confidence I never had in high school, and that confidence will carry me throughout the rest of my future life and career.

Typically, engineers have a tendency to imbalance their time between studying and those fun, uniquely-college experiences. For whatever reason, I was lucky enough to not encounter that problem, and I try to make the most of the time I balance every day while at school. Most engineers would say their most memorable moment took place in a classroom or during an internship or maybe even in their freshman year dorm. But, my most memorable moment at this university so far occurred in the nationally renowned Beaver Stadium. I grew up watching college football, even before I had my own team to root for. This past year I was part of one of the most amazing games in college history, when an unranked Penn State defeated the #2 Ohio State on a returned, blocked field-goal. That freezing night in October I became a live participant in something I had grown up watching on a TV screen. Through physically shaking during the majority of that game—half from the cold, half from the anxiety of the game—to storming the field in celebration of that unprecedented win, I for the first time realized the true power and meaning of the school I was a part of. Surrounded by my friends, and a community of other students a part of the same amazing thing I was, that night was without a doubt the most memorable moment of my college experience so far.

Along with my most memorable moment, Penn State has also fostered my greatest accomplishment. Coming from a single mom in a small, Southern town, money has always been a stressor and concern in the back of my mind. Through the real-world experiences Penn State—as well as State College as a town—has provided me, I have been able to learn how to support myself financially and begun to learn the tools to living on my own. At the end of the day, things like how and when to save, where to shop for what, and similar lessons in living are not taught in the classroom. But it's through the values, confidence, and readiness for the future that Penn State has instilled that I have been able to succeed in beginning to support myself. The part-time job I hold has taught me even more so about the value of every penny, and how to balance my savings and future as well as I can balance my time. Learning how to support myself is my greatest accomplishment.

I've only spent two years so far at Penn State, but those two years have allowed me to experience and accomplish more than all eighteen years I spent

waiting to be in college. Being able to receive this scholarship for the last year of my degree program would mean the world to me and encourage those passions I have outlined even further. This university has shaped my passions, held my most memorable moments, my greatest accomplishments, introduced me to some of my closest friends, and created the beginnings of my career as an electrical engineer.