Alumni Corner

Industry Advisory Board Helps Shape Student Success

The business community needs a university like Mason to grow and change with the growth of industry in the area,” says Paul Leslie, a member of the Volgenau School Industry Advisory board and CEO of Dovel Technologies in McLean, Virginia. “The Volgenau School has kept pace with the technology industry here in Northern Virginia, and it’s great for the school, the students, and both the public and private sector.”

Leslie is an advisory board member who embodies the synergy that the Volgenau School wants to create and maintain with the community. “I’ve been involved with the school since the ’90s,” says Leslie. He explains that his corporate leadership positions and background in software development made him initially seek out resources for his company in the form of research, continuing education, and employees. “Mason was the logical source to tap into,” he says. Over the past twenty years, Leslie has been involved with the University and the Volgenau School on various working boards. Several years ago board chairman Charlie Joyce was tasked with reinventing the board with a renewed focus on academics and workforce development—how the school could best prepare students for work.

“Students benefit from understanding what is expected of them both technically through their classes but also through internships, co-ops, and part-time jobs that teach them about performance and teamwork,” says Leslie. Fellow board member Margaret Myers headed a subcommittee that surveyed current and past students about how prepared they felt for work. Leslie says that they received tremendous feedback that has been valuable to the committee and to the school as it works to align academics and programs.

Leslie says that access to intern and future hires is an incredible benefit to committee members and corporate members who support the school. He’s quick to laud the accomplishments of the entire board explaining that it has been effective because it is made up of individuals who are business owners, executives, and technology professionals who understand the coursework and study that engineering students need to succeed. Additionally, board members are active and come ready to work and make a difference.

The full Volgenau School Board meets four times a year with working subcommittees that meet on various tasks. The board is working to sponsor an annual technology symposium to bring attention to hot tech issues. The first symposium brought industry leaders and the school together to discuss cyber security. Leslie says that there is a growing need for graduates working in cyber security jobs but also with “big data,” large data sets and data mining positions. This field is growing in importance and a future symposium is in the works.

Alumni Join Forces to Help Students

The Volgenau School is fortunate to have a growing number of alumni who are anxious to help our current engineering students be successful. The cadre of alumni is growing each year, in part, from events like the Annual Volgenau Alumni Dinner. This year’s dinner was held in November, hosted by the Volgenau Alumni Board, chaired by Hadi Rezaaizad, PhD ’09. Our keynote speaker was Dean Ken Ball, the recently appointed Dean of the Volgenau School of Engineering.

Mason alums can register to be mentors, review student resumes, or help with mock interviews.

The dinner marked the consolidation of alumni efforts into one alumni organization with a focus on outreach to students. Our 2012-13 events include an employment panel and workshop called “Road Map to Success” held in the spring, and a student leaders dinner to be held at the end of the semester. The Volgenau Alumni Board meets every three months at the Fairfax campus and would enjoy having you join us and share your ideas on ways to help our students.

In addition to efforts by the Volgenau Alumni Board, Mason’s Career Services recently started Mason Career Link, where Mason alums can register to be mentors, review student resumes, or help with mock interviews.

Contact Pete Farrell, Director of Alumni Relations, at pfarrell@gmu.edu or call 703.993.9693.