



LIVE & LEARN

Celebrating Ten Years of Empowering Women Engineers with RDELLC

■ *By* AMY WAGNER ■

In fall 2012, the Douglass Engineering Living-Learning Community welcomed its first cohort of 20 first-year SoE women students. Since then, more than 250 alumnae have benefited from the innovative community's focus on leadership development, academic mentoring, and preparation for post-graduate success. ■ From the start, former SoE dean Thomas Farris and then-Douglass College dean Jacquelyn Litt shared a vision for creating a dynamic, inclusive living-learning community where women engineering students could thrive. ■ "An important goal of ours was to increase the number of women studying engineering," says Farris, who stepped down as dean in June. "With the living-learning community, we've sent a powerful message of support to women at the School of Engineering." ■ Litt recounts they shared an additional priority of "growing a cohort of alumnae who ▶▶▶▶

would continue their special ties to Douglass and SoE and serve as mentors to students.”

Brian ENG’80 and Stacey DC’80 Reilly, who in 2016 endowed the community — which was renamed the Reilly Douglass Engineering Living-Learning Community (RDELLC) in their honor — identify two other benefits. “The obvious benefit is the tremendous retention rate associated with the women who have gone through the program,” says Brian Reilly. “The second is less direct, but equally important. RDELLC provides an inspiration for the young women coming out of high school who are considering STEM careers, as they know RDELLC is an environment in which they can thrive.”

A Positive Impact

The couple’s support of RDELLC has expanded the opportunities for RDELLC students to make a positive impact both at Rutgers and the wider world.

“All students need support and encouragement when it comes to a technically oriented degree program — especially one as challenging as a Rutgers engineering degree,” says Stacey Reilly. “RDELLC

COLLABORATIVE SPIRIT The Introduction to Engineering course for RDELLC students involves hands-on projects, lectures, and sessions with engineering faculty from each department to provide information for choosing a major.



“I was attracted to RDELLC’s promise of a women’s community, and safe space.”

KAORI MOYE, ENG’22

Kimberly Cook-Chennault, associate dean of diversity, equity, and inclusion and associate professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering teaches the Intro to Engineering RDELLC course.

provides that with its collaborative environment in which the students not only support each other but also receive targeted mentoring and advice along the way.”

Over the past ten years, Helen Buettner, professor and chair of the Department of Chemical and Biochemical Engineering, taught the RDELLC Intro to Engineering course and saw firsthand how RDELLC has positively impacted students.

“The striking thing to me is how prominent RDELLC women are in student life, how many leadership positions they hold in student organizations, their success along varied career paths — and perhaps most important — the enduring networks of connections that nucleated with RDELLC and then extended well beyond it to support other women in the school as well,” Buettner says.

Targeted Programing

RDELLC students benefit from many opportunities for hands-on-learning, mentoring, interaction with alumni representatives from SoE and Douglass Residential College (DRC), and programming centered on their professional development and academic achievement.

Moving forward, Kimberly Cook-Chennault, associate dean of diversity, equity, and inclusion and mechanical and aerospace engineering associate professor, will be teaching the Intro to Engineering course.

Douglass Women in Science and Engineering



“Each element in this community is integral to students’ development as members of the STEM community and to their journey in womanhood. Skills are developed. Networks are built. Friendships are forged. These things stay with RDELLC students for life.”

— LYDIA PRENDERGAST, DOUGLASS WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING PROGRAM DIRECTOR AND ASSOCIATE DEAN



LEFT, Laura Gunderson, Katherine Lau, and Tatyana Crespo are among the 20 inaugural RDELLC students in 2012; RIGHT, First year students Danielle Bayne, Rachel Chempiel, Paloma Hidalgo, and Karris Robertson value the close knit community RDELLC offers.



program director and associate dean Lydia Prendergast who was instrumental in developing the course, notes, “Each element in RDELLC is integral to students’ development. Skills are developed. Networks are built. Friendships are forged. These things stay with students for life.”

Recognizing that women were underrepresented in engineering, electrical and computer engineering major Kaori Moye, a member of the RDELLC Class of 2022 who is now working with Lockheed Martin’s rotary and missions systems department, was attracted by RDELLC’s promise of a women’s community, safe space, and alumnae network. She readily advises incoming RDELLC members to use all the resources provided by DRC — from a regular de-stressing program that combats burn-out to help in funding

professional organization memberships, such as the National Society for Black Engineers (NSBE).

The Next Ten Years: A Promising Future

Little anticipates that over the next ten years, alternative learning communities, ancillary to RDELLC, will be established, while Farris expects that its Intro to Engineering course will become a model for building out engineering exploration for other engineering students.

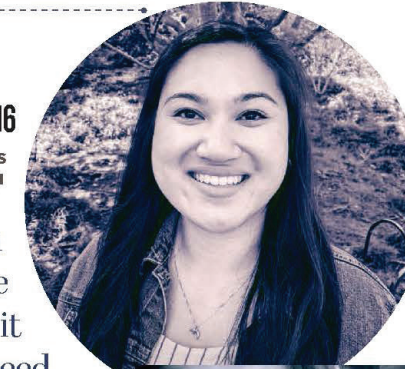
Brian Reilly puts it this way: “Our hope would be that RDELLC continues to be a positive, nourishing, collaborative environment in which Douglass women engineers can continue to thrive and achieve their academic and life goals.” **SoE**



WOMEN OF RDELLC

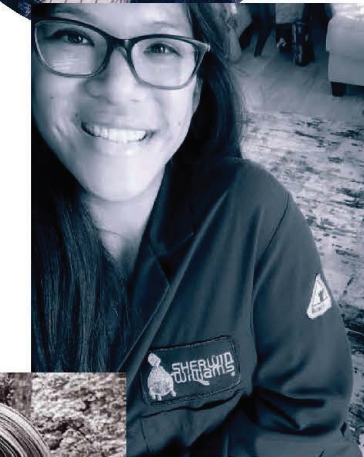
WORKING, LEADING, AND SUCCEEDING IN EXCITING CAREERS

Katherine Lau, BME'16
SENIOR REGULATORY AFFAIRS ASSOCIATE, BECTON DICKINSON



“Support given to women in engineering makes a huge difference. If anything, it taught me that women need to stick together and be open to opportunities to help each other climb the ladder of life. I hope RDELLC will continue to expand its community to more women in the next ten years.”

Amanda Chin, MSE'16
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT MANAGER, SHERWIN WILLIAMS



“A strong support system of women engineers in a male-dominated field is integral to how we progress in society. Not only do I have a seat at the table, I’m also among my peers. I wouldn’t be in the position I’m in without the women I met in RDELLC and DRC, who are truly my best friends.”

Tiffany Kingsley Cacace, BME'16
NUCLEAR SHIFT TEST SUPERVISOR, NAVAL NUCLEAR SUBMARINES, NORFOLK NAVAL SHIPYARD



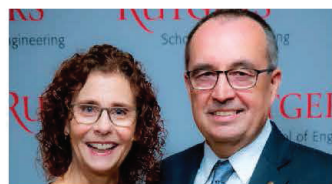
“I wouldn’t be where I am today without being a part of RDELLC. The connections and opportunities provided me with networking connections, internships, and the experience to acquire the job I have today. I’ve maintained mentor connections and some of my closest friends were a result of being part of the RDELLC program.”

Sara Wengrowski, CEE'17, '19
DATA CENTER PROFESSIONAL, META (FORMERLY FACEBOOK)



“The RDELLC program built up my confidence to succeed in a male-dominated industry, equipped me with leadership and mentorship experience, and technical expertise. I’m excited to see RDELLC continue to produce empowered, intelligent, and thoughtful women.”

Leading the Way



PASSIONATE SUPPORTERS OF WOMEN ENGINEERS

Brian Reilly (ENG'80) and his wife Stacey (DC'80) share a passion to give women engineers the support and mentoring they need to succeed. By generously endowing the Reilly Douglass Engineering Living-Learning Community in 2016, they have ensured that SoE women students have an opportunity to flourish in a supportive, collaborative environment. A retired senior vice president with Bechtel and past chair and current member of the SoE Industry Advisory Board, Reilly received the Dean’s Award for Service and Lifetime Achievement at the 2022 Medal of Excellence dinner.