

SAME Construction and Engineering Camps: Building Great Engineers by Mentoring Students

By Mr. Ron Brown

In the summer of 2000, the Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) embarked on a venture that would prove to be one of its most successful tools to expose talented high school students to the excitement of engineering and construction. Several SAME members, together with officials from the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) in Colorado Springs, Colorado, designed a one-week curriculum focused on general engineering and construction, set in a student-mentor camp environment. The camp provided specially selected students from grades 10 through 12 with a hands-on orientation to engineering as a career.

In this specially selected and environmentally beautiful setting at USAFA, students came together with new graduate engineers and seasoned engineering and construction veterans of SAME to share engineering concepts and discuss the attributes associated with an engineering career. The students were guided in their daily activities by USAFA cadets majoring in engineering and were exposed to topics such as—

- Concrete beam design.
- Materials testing.
- Paradox anomalies.
- Storage shed design and construction.
- Leadership training.

Their mentors provided guidance and counseling by answering the never-ending questions from these talented students.

The success of the first SAME-USAFA Engineering and Construction Camp provided the initial roadmap for the development of a camp cosponsored by the United States Navy at Naval Base Ventura County at Port Hueneme, California, and another cosponsored by the United States Army Engineering Research and Development Center at Vicksburg, Mississippi. The Engineering and Construction Camps bring each student closer to an understanding of what engineering careers offer and allow them to experience the camps' activities and events with student peers from the United States and around the world.

As a result of these camps, many of the student alumni have been nominated for and appointed to attend each of the military service academies. Camp alumni have now graduated from the academies and are pursuing military engineering

careers. Through the excitement generated by the camps, many of the students have decided to pursue a broad range of engineering careers and are attending some of the nation's most prestigious universities and engineering colleges approved by ABET, Inc., formerly known as the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology.

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In 2009, SAME, in concert with cosponsors from the military Services and SAME posts worldwide, will celebrate its tenth consecutive year of conducting these camps and providing a valued service to our nation and the engineering profession. SAME is truly a force multiplier in waging the “War on Talent” to ensure that students and families get the opportunity to understand and seek valued engineering careers.

Be a part of this tremendous movement and share the experience of being a valued mentor at one of the SAME Construction and Engineering Camps next summer. Make a difference by helping with *Building Great Engineers*. For more information about the SAME Engineering and Construction Camps, visit <http://www.posts.same.org/camps>. To sign up as a mentor for one of the camps, visit <http://posts.same.org/camps/2008/mentors.htm>. 

Mr. Brown is a retired Army colonel and a senior executive with Sundt Construction, Inc. He is a member of the SAME national board of directors and the national chair for the SAME Engineering and Construction Camps. He also serves as the national chair of the Government Affairs Committee for the Associated General Contractors of America.

