

THE IMPACT OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

I have had the honor and privilege to lead a group of amazing, diverse, and underrepresented engineers in STEM over the last year as the chapter president of the Society of Women Engineers (SWE). At the University of New Mexico (UNM) within the School of Engineering (SOE), SWE is one of the largest, active student organizations supported by the Engineering Student Success (ESS) Center. SWE was created to represent women in engineering but our members are not only women and we represent more than just engineers.



SWE encourages our members to volunteer in the community to motivate and excite passion for STEM in New Mexico students. Through workshops and conferences, we help our members expand their professional network and technical skills. Above all, however, SWE is a resource and platform for students to develop as engineers and succeed in their academic and personal lives through connection and engagement with others in the UNM SOE community.

This last year has been particularly difficult, stressful, and uncertain with the COVID-19 global pandemic. As a community, our lives as students were shaken from death, housing and food insecurity, job instability, racial inequality, unprecedented climate change, and so much more. While each of us felt the impact in varying degrees, SWE remained a constant at UNM where we organized more events for our members than ever before and saw unprecedented turnout. We invited new, engaging guest speakers to our general meetings, and distributed reusable masks to decorate for socials. SWE transitioned our award-winning outreach event, Art of Science, to a virtual platform to continue to reach hundreds of local girl scouts excited about STEM.

The 2020/2021 academic year looked different for SWE. We tried our hardest to support our members and community partners like we have for years. I know SWE makes a great difference in our members lives that last longer than just a semester. Below are statements made by other leaders in SWE attesting to the effect of the organization, ESS, and SOE. I encourage you all to read their perspectives and join me in looking forward to witnessing the impact of inspired and empowered women in STEM.

Anna Janicek, Undergraduate Junior pursuing Electrical Engineering

Joining the Society of Women Engineers has been one of the best decisions I have made during my time at UNM. In a field that is male dominated, I believe it is really important for women to support each other to pursue the degree. SWE allows women engineers from all disciplines to come together and gain that support. Support and friendships are a major aspect of the organization, but opportunities for career development, leadership, and much more are also available. SWE has expanded my professional network, by allowing me to practice my networking through conferences, professional development events, etc. The organization has also given me the confidence to take on more and more leadership each year. The community and resources SWE provide to its members is what has had the most positive impact on my experience as an engineering student at UNM.

Hailey Cuevas, Undergraduate Junior pursuing Chemical and Biological Engineering

My involvement with UNM SWE has broadened my perspective in so many ways. I have gotten to know so many amazing women of different backgrounds, including those outside of my major, international students, and working mothers. It has taught me the value of diverse perspectives, and that the perspective of one woman cannot possibly speak for the perspectives of all women. The most important thing that SWE does, in my opinion, is to demand more seats at the table so that all women can be properly represented.

Emily Ganley, Undergraduate Senior pursuing Chemical and Biological Engineering

The various events and opportunities provided by the UNM School of Engineering, Engineering Student Success Center, and Society of Women Engineers has helped me network with peers and learn about various engineering fields. Through these organizations I have met many other students from various disciplines within engineering and have gotten to know them well. Workshops provided by these organizations have also expanded my skill set and helped me identify areas that I want to learn more about and/or improve on.

Without these three organizations, I would not only have been more lost in my field and career direction, but I wouldn't have had the opportunity to meet various students at UNM. Getting to know other students and participating in events has given me confidence in my abilities and inspiration that I can succeed with everyone else. Getting to learn about other engineering fields and what other students are doing through these organizations is helping me become a better-rounded student and future professional.

Mari Aoki, Undergraduate Junior pursuing Computer Science

The School of Engineering, Engineering Student Services, and Society of Women Engineers have all collaborated to create robust resources spanning academic, career, and social spheres. If I've ever had an issue in my undergraduate, I knew that I could use one of these support services to help. The team with ESS is dedicated to helping all students do well in classes as well as provide a large system of internships and volunteering opportunities that have often personally helped me. Additionally, SWE is a great resource to meet like-minded people and meaningfully engage with one another to support the effort to have more women in engineering. I have become close friends (and even roommates) with the members of SWE and know I can rely on them for emotional and academic support. In coalition, these engineering services have allowed me to have unique friendships and internships that would not have been possible in another department.

Isabella Obermeier, Undergraduate Senior pursuing Computer Engineering

As a Korean immigrant, I never had the luxury of fitting in with the majority when I was growing up. To my peers, the foods I brought for lunch were strange, I looked physically different, and my lifestyle was foreign. I was too Korean for America and too American for Korea, so I constantly felt isolated. However, this shifted when I started my chemical engineering degree at UNM and joined student organizations such as SWE. UNM is an institution with a diverse population, even reflected in just the CBE department alone, which already made me feel more comfortable. In SWE, I resonated with my peers who expressed familiar sentiments of being the minority, aka being the only woman in the room, from all sorts of perspectives across varying engineering majors. I have been fortunate to be immersed in an empowering community of inspiring women that accept and support me, which has continuously motivated me to persevere in a male-dominated field.

Rose Lee, Undergraduate Senior pursuing Chemical and Biological Engineering



SOE and ESS has been one of the greatest resources for scholarships and networking opportunities that I have experienced at UNM. They provided many opportunities that have allowed me to accumulate funds opening up financial freedom, flexibility, and peace of mind to take on leadership roles in SWE that I am extremely grateful for. Their offices are filled with helpful and hardworking staff that have the student's best interest in mind, and they constantly work for inclusion and retention of a diverse student body.

SWE was one of the main student organizations that reached out to me my freshman year of college, and has been nothing but an extraordinary resource for networking opportunities, meeting new friends, and providing physical and mental health tips and workshops to lessen the stresses and uncertainties of the engineering field. SWE reinforces that engineering is a field that no matter the gender, race, ethnicity, you can succeed, and you belong.

Mary Arnhart, Undergraduate Junior pursuing Mechanical Engineering

Being a member of SWE has helped me feel more confident in my choice to pursue a career in engineering. When I am struggling or doubting myself, I know I can rely on the support of my friends and SWE members to help give me strength and confidence.

Angela Patterson, Undergraduate Junior pursuing Mechanical Engineering

SOE and ESS have both contributed positively to my experience at UNM. They provided me with resources, scholarship information, and networking opportunities that have helped guide me through my journey as an undergraduate student. I always feel welcome and comfortable in their office full of dedicated staff that have the student's best interest at heart.

SWE has been a huge part of my life at UNM. This organization has provided me with leadership experience, networking opportunities, workshops, new friends, and so much more. I have gained confidence in myself and my abilities through being a part of this organization and meeting so many diverse individuals in STEM fields. SWE promotes engineering as a viable and exciting career choice for women and has continually encouraged me in my engineering degree path.

Haley Chavez, Undergraduate Junior pursuing Civil Engineering

SWE has given UNM a safe place for women in STEM and has given many resources to the club's members. STEM can be hard sometimes, but this club has given me so much love and support throughout my college experience. By having clubs like SWE we are promoting diversity throughout SOE and UNM.

Katherine Sanchez, Undergraduate Junior pursuing Mechanical Engineering