

BECOMING ENGINEERS

The Department of Computer Science recently became part of the College of Engineering. One of the great concerns is what does it mean to be an engineer? In what ways are computer scientists engineers? These are not idle questions, but ones which the administration and faculty in the College of Engineering are seriously concerned with¹.

In this project, you are being asked to help answer this and pull the disparate disciplines together. There are a number of places where students, prospective students, faculty, and alumni come into contact with information about the College of Engineering. There is a wealth of factual and promotional material that is presented in the various College and departmental websites but does it convey what is common to being an engineer? Where does one learn what is exciting about engineering? What are hot new ideas? Why do students want to become engineers? What is difference between school and work as an engineer? What are some of those other engineering classes and labs all about? How can someone find out more? What motivates someone to find out more?

This project will work through this theme and create a meaningful way to reach some set of users. "Working through" involves asking good questions about the theme and investigating what it means to VT faculty, alumni, and students.

This might be a website either replacing the current College site or supplementing the current ones.

Or this might be a public interactive display. We are planning on putting up a plasma display in the lobby of the Dean's office and outside of a couple of large lecture halls within the College. What can be done with them in this context?

Or you might come up with an entirely different medium.

You will be graded on the quality of questions you ask, the inventiveness of your design, and the quality of the display and interaction. You will need to conceive a project that you can complete and it must work.

Since this is a serious matter, you should consider that your "client" for this work is the Dean and the Department Heads of the College of Engineering. You will need to identify users in the College and develop the needs from them. Possible users to consider are the Dean's staff (*which includes Steve Harrison*), undergraduates, graduates, faculty, and alumni. Remember, this is about pulling together the disparate disciplines that constitute engineering.

¹ Starting next year, entering computer science students will (probably) take an Engineering Fundamental class that will introduce some engineering ideas and problem-solving skills. We are assuming that most students are not