



ENGINEERING GRAD JIM BURNS HIT THE GROUND RUNNING WITH LOCKHEED MARTIN

BY CATHY ENNS

WHAT DOES IT MEAN for a Cal Poly grad to be ready to hit the ground running as graduation approaches? For Jim Burns (**B.S., Electrical Engineering, 2006**), it meant a resume in Lockheed Martin's "high potential" stack, seven interviews and three job offers at the company's Space Systems business unit in Sunnyvale, Calif.

Now a senior systems engineer with the defense contractor, Burns recalls that he felt "lab-ready, tested and tried" when Lockheed Martin hired him upon graduation.

Cal Poly offered various career developing opportunities, and Burns was quick to take advantage. He started with career fairs—creating a resume and attending one of the events in his sophomore year.

As a junior, Burns used the Career Services website extensively, mining it for resume tips and cover letter strategies and signing up for on-campus interviews. Those moves helped him land an internship in Southern California at Alcon Laboratories, a biomedical company specializing in eye care products.

He spent six months at Alcon's Irvine Technology Center, researching and characterizing lasers to be used in a future eye surgical device. The following summer, he returned for a second stint at Alcon, designing the LCD control panel circuit board for the same surgical device.

Burns credits the many engineering Learn by Doing opportunities Cal Poly offered for his workforce-readiness. One of these opportunities was PolySat, a student-led project that builds and launches cube-sized satellites into space to perform research and explore new technologies for various sponsors—one of which is Lockheed Martin.

The College of Engineering supports students in many ways, Burns said. The fact that open lab hours are available on weekends, for example, is a major advantage that gives students freedom complete lab assignments, work on senior projects or follow their own interests. And the proliferation of lab courses provides important hands-on opportunities.

"Nearly every engineering class has a one-unit lab along with it," he said. "In those labs, students work with the same technology they'll be using on the job. That's one reason that, pound for pound, Cal Poly engineering units outweigh those of other universities."

Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company has a similar view, regarding Cal Poly as one of their "key schools" and singling out the university for a top-level partnership. The company assists the College of Engineering with curriculum development and funding support. Not surprisingly, Cal Poly grads are one of the largest alumni groups on the Sunnyvale campus and, like Burns, many are now involved in Cal Poly recruiting efforts.

Now in his sixth year at Lockheed Martin, Burns continues to build his portfolio of experience in true Learn by Doing style. He has worked on a variety of spacecraft and missile defense programs and performed various functions. His roles have included hardware design, systems integration, project management and problem resolution.

What will Burns tackle next? Even though he hastened to say "there's no guarantee," he did note that he was selected for—and recently completed—a three-year Engineering Leadership Development Program at Lockheed Martin. Next stop: management? □