

One aspect of engineering that a lot of people forget about is the interpersonal connections that you will need and the skills on how to maintain them. If you are an abrasive person who can only work by yourself, most companies will not be eager to hire you. Coinciding with this, many problems that engineers are tasked with solving involve some human problem, and if an engineer cannot communicate effectively with their client then it will be extremely difficult to develop the best solution. A valuable skill for an engineer to have is empathy, being able to not only listen to, but understand the problem that your clients are facing. If you can relate to the client, if you can truly understand their problem, then you will have a much easier time developing a solution for that problem.

This human aspect is one that is not completely covered in the core engineering classes, as most of those are focused on the problem solving side of things. In my years at Iowa State I have taken some general education classes that I believe will enhance my abilities to excel at an engineering job. I have taken Agronomy 342, which is a class devoted to teaching students about the problems of world hunger and what other people are going through on a daily basis. Through this class I have developed much more empathy for those living in these struggling countries, and have become cognizant of some of the global problems that are not only contributing, but sometimes causing these problems. This type of mindset I think is invaluable to have as an engineer, as it can become a real problem if you always assume that everyone is as well off as you, or you can only understand the problems that you yourself have faced. I also benefitted from this class by learning that not all solutions will work in every context. Which I think will help in my future approaches to problems, making sure to understand not only the context of the problem, but also the context of where the solution is being implemented.

Another mindset I think more engineers should have is one that is more appreciative and understanding of other cultures. Related to this I took four semesters worth of Chinese language classes; 101, 102, 201, and 202, during my college career. I took these out of an interest in Chinese culture as well as a desire to hopefully one day communicate better with other cultures because of my knowledge. Through these classes I have acquired a greater understanding of other cultures and some of the reasons behind their stances on a variety of things such as politics, society, and family. I think one of the big problems in today's world is people's lack of understanding of foreign cultures, leading to a world of fear, fear of the unknown.

When I graduate I hope to work in industry, preferably on a team that is committed to creating a good work environment, and dedicated to the customers they are creating the product for. I believe that what makes a good product great is the team's ability to develop solutions that are directly relevant to their customers. I want to eventually move to a senior engineering role, with the goal of connecting more with other teams in the company, and fostering communication not only within a team, but also between teams.