


SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND COMPUTER SCIENCE

SECS employees
recognized with
UPCEA Engagement
Award



Bianca Bryant and Chris Kobus were honored with the University Professional and Continuing Education Association award for providing outstanding educational programming to K-12 students.

 October 25, 2021

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Professor Chris Kobus, director of Outreach, Recruitment, and Retention, and Bianca Bryant, assistant director of Outreach, Recruitment and Retention, for the Oakland University School of Engineering and Computer Science have been honored with the University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA) Engagement Award for providing outstanding educational programming to K-12 students.

The SECS Outreach Program, which Kobus founded in 2010, provides hands-on STEM education to K-12 schools across Metro Detroit, including programming geared toward women and underrepresented minority students. With strong support from the Dean of Engineering and Computer Science, Dr. Kobus and Bryant have implemented STEM summer camps, STEM field trips, and STEM teacher-training workshops, partnered with programs such as Gear Up, and provided STEM educational programs to nonprofits such as Detroit Area Pre-College Engineering Program (DAPCEP) and the Engineering Society of Detroit (ESD). When the coronavirus hit, Dr. Kobus and Bryant developed online STEM modules to provide a way for students to learn safely from home.

The UPCEA Engagement Award recognizes an outstanding partnership between a member institution and one or more external constituents such as local communities, corporations, government organizations, or associations. The recognized partnership demonstrates a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources that has resulted in a measurable and sustainable shared impact in areas such as economic development, community development, workforce training, or capacity building.

According to SECS Outreach Program surveys, more than 90 percent of participants have their expectations exceeded. Many participants later enroll at Oakland University and work in SECS as student assistants.

“They give us testimonies about their own experiences as children when they attended our summer camps or field trips,” said Dr. Kobus. “As we continue developing these STEM initiatives, we hope to continue to graduate students who participate. More importantly, we hope that we have impacted students in a way that will allow them to thrive no matter what career or field they embark on.”

“It is a joy getting to know every student that attends our STEM programs,” added Bryant. “We strive to ensure that we are providing a safe and fun learning environment for everyone. It’s been especially gratifying to offer virtual programming to keep students engaged during the pandemic.”

Professor Kobus has been teaching classes at Oakland University since 1995. His area of interest is in energy with a particular emphasis on clean energy. He started an alternative energy curriculum in the Mechanical Engineering department, which has expanded to a certificate program for recent graduates. Dr. Kobus has received several education grants in his efforts including from Next Energy, Michigan Energy Works, The State of Michigan Talent Investment Agency, the Michigan Space Grant Consortium and the US Department

of Energy, plus school district partners. With the most recent DOE grant, Dr. Kobus started a Clean Energy Research Center (CERC), for which he was the Founding Director that had as part of its mission public outreach and K-12 supplemental education.

Along with her role as assistant director of Outreach, Recruitment and Retention, Bryant is the co-chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee in the School of Engineering and Computer Science (SECS). She is the support staff for the Formula SAE Team, National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), and is the Faculty Advisor for the Association of Black Students. She has a passion for assisting all underrepresented minorities and at-risk youth within the area of STEM, and works with numerous campus partners to coordinate OU STEM camps, field trips, and community outreach initiatives. Bryant is working to obtain her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and is an active committee member for Oakland university's Center for Multicultural Initiatives.

Founded in 1915, the [UPCEA](#) is among the oldest college and university associations in the United States. Since its inception, the association has been committed to making higher education available to everyone, as well as to ensure that programs and services address societal needs and economic trends.