

SUMMER BRIDGE

TOLL-FREE

A New NSBE Scholarship Gives College Students a Good Start in Engineering

Everyone knows what a bridge is, right? Merriam-Webster dictionary says it's "a structure carrying a pathway or roadway over a depression or obstacle." But as a NSBE Jr. member, you are also used to seeing the word "bridge" used another way, as on the cover of this magazine. That type of bridge, Merriam-Webster says, is "a time, place, or means of connection or transition." *NSBE Bridge* was created to help students like you make the *transition* from middle school and high school to the college or university where you will get your engineering degree.

Many of the universities you may choose have bridges of their own, which are also designed to help you get your degree in engineering. The universities call them "summer bridge programs," and the college students who lead the National Society of Black Engineers have found that these programs are very important to your academic success.

"If you look at the data, the students who go through a summer bridge program are more likely to graduate with a degree in engineering," says Jasmine I. Keene, who is NSBE's national programs chair this year.

Summer bridge programs take in new college students before the start of their freshman year. The summer bridge is usually run by minority engineering programs (MEPs) at the colleges, and it helps the students improve their skills in subjects such as physics, calculus and



Participants in this year's Engineering Academic Boot Camp at Purdue University: 12 students received NSBE Bridge Scholarships to attend the summer bridge program.

chemistry. Most engineering students have to take "gateway classes" in these subjects during their first year in college. The summer bridge programs help them get a good start.

This year, NSBE launched a new *NSBE Bridge Scholarship* to help make NSBE Jr. members aware of the importance of summer bridge programs and to make it easier for them to participate. More than \$33,000 in scholarship grants were awarded to 27 students at 10 universities in the U.S. The grants paid for the cost of the bridge programs, which ranged from \$300 to \$2,588 per student. Purdue University had the largest number of scholarship recipients: 12 NSBE members received grants to participate in Purdue's Engineering

Academic Boot Camp.

Olivia Spurlock is one of five students who received NSBE Bridge Scholarships to attend the Summer Transition Program for Minority Engineers (STP) at North Carolina State University this year.

"(The scholarship) allowed me to have a head start in the challenging courses that I am taking now," she explains. "We took a calculus course, chemistry fundamentals workshop, spatial visualization and an English workshop. In addition...every Friday, we took company visits – to Eastman, IBM, Cisco, Net App, Caterpillar and GE Aviation."

The scholarship also helped her in nonacademic ways, says Spurlock, who intends to major in mechanical engineer-

ing: "The scholarship helped me make connections with other individuals like myself, who had the same aspirations of success that I had. This is crucial to me now, because I have a support system that I can come to."

Keene says NSBE's leadership is planning to expand the NSBE Bridge Scholarship program next year and hopes to increase the number of students who apply for it. NSBE also plans to continue to make the program more effective, she says, by tracking the academic progress of the scholarship recipients throughout their college career.

For more information about the NSBE Bridge Scholarship, contact NSBE's Programs Team at programs@nsbe.org or (703) 549-2207. ■