



Chemical engineering senior Lizette Jimenez finds world of opportunities at Iowa State

March 10, 2014 By Eleni Upah

Originally from Chicago, chemical engineering senior Lizette Jimenez had no interest in coming to Iowa State. It wasn't until she had the opportunity to visit the university for an event now called Multicultural Scholars Preview that she discovered the close-knit community here and decided she wanted to be a part of it.

"I felt really welcomed when I came and that Iowa State was reaching out to me," said Jimenez. "They clearly had an interest in me."

Now in her last year at Iowa State, Jimenez has fully immersed herself in the College of Engineering community. She jumped into research right away, working with Jennifer Heinen, a senior lecturer in chemical and biological engineering, conducting experiments on semi-continuous microemulsion polymerizations.

Jimenez is involved in a variety of campus clubs and organizations, including leadership roles in the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers/Mexican-American Engineers and Scientists and directing Noche de Ciencias—a science night held in Des Moines that targets 100 K-12 students and their parents.

She also works for Engineering Student Services and the Program for Women in Science and Engineering. Jimenez even spent a semester studying abroad in Lausanne, Switzerland, where she could put her minor in French to use.

"My favorite thing about the program is how many opportunities the College of Engineering gives to its students," she said. "If I want to do research, I can do research. If I want to study abroad but still stay on track within my engineering studies, I can do that."

"Anything you want to focus on, you can do it at Iowa State."



Since she already spoke Spanish, Jimenez started taking French in high school and continued in college because she recognized that engineering is such a global field. "I wanted to take it up a notch and be valuable to my employers," she said. "My next language to learn is German."

The stress of being so involved with school and activities hasn't deterred Jimenez from taking the extra steps to excel in her profession. And with graduation just a few months away, she might even find a little free time—because while her peers are looking for jobs, she's already accepted a position with Cargill in one of its newest facilities in Nebraska.

Jimenez completed two rotations with Cargill in Sidney, Ohio and Chicago as an intern. In the first co-op, she worked in the soybean oil refinery unit helping refine, deodorize, and bleach soybean oil to make it as pure as possible for companies like McDonalds and Kellogg's to use.

The second internship was almost a reversal of her first work: "The second time I took the same soybean oil and actually messed it up all over again," said Jimenez. "I put oxygen back into it and increased the viscosity so it could be used for previously petroleum-based applications."

She enjoyed both experiences, especially interacting with the operators and seeing their management of day-to-day problems.

"Being able to see firsthand what chemical engineers do—how they take something that was done in a chemistry lab and make it into a large scale production in a plant—that was probably my favorite part."

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