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From MechE to Aerojet Rocketdyne: an Eagle finds her wings

December 15, 2022

Graduating senior Lydia Poole began her college career as a first-generation student on Georgia Southern University's Armstrong Campus in Savannah. Originally seeking a mathematics degree, Poole changed her major to [mechanical engineering](#) right before classes started.



"I love mathematics," Poole said. "But I changed to mechanical engineering because I wanted a program that would challenge me. It still incorporates the STEM topics that I love, but I knew going into this program would grow me in ways I couldn't even imagine, and it has."

For Poole, the Armstrong Campus felt like a second home when she started college. She was minutes away from her family and enjoyed a personal relationship with both her fellow students and her professors.

"I love the tight-knit nature of the Armstrong Campus," Poole said. "The professors really take the time to get to know you and your interests, and help you pursue research and internships that match that. It's nice to feel noticed, and all of the engineering students knew each other. One of my favorite memories was during my sophomore year. We had a little Friendsgiving in the [Engineering Learning Center](#). We played card games and ate good food and just had a good time. I loved having that community around me."

When she transitioned to the Statesboro Campus to finish her degree, the friends she had made in her program made the jump with her.

“It was a really great support system because we were all in the same boat,” Poole said. “I had a friend group of six or seven who all moved out to Statesboro at the same time and we all had each other’s backs, which was really nice. It was comforting to know that we were all doing this together.”

After her commencement ceremony on Dec. 13, Poole plans to move to Alabama where she has accepted a job with Aerojet Rocketdyne, an American manufacturer of rocket, hypersonic, and electric propulsive systems for space, defense, civil and commercial applications. She partially credits this new role to the experience she earned through her co-ops.

“I did two [co-op rotations](#),” Poole said. “In the spring and fall of 2021, I worked with Heatcraft Worldwide Refrigeration and in the summer of 2022 I worked with Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation. It’s different than working in a classroom. Being in the classroom gets you in the right mindset, but actually working is a whole other world. These experiences make you more competitive when looking for a job, too, and I was really grateful for them.”

Poole also gained leadership experience through her time as vice president for Georgia Southern’s chapter of [Pi Tau Sigma](#), an international honor society for mechanical engineers, and as president of Georgia Southern’s chapter of the [Society of Women Engineers \(SWE\)](#). She will continue her role as president of SWE in the spring while planning her June wedding.

“I met my fiancé on the Armstrong Campus,” Poole said. “He was a mechanical engineering major and graduated in May. He has been an amazing support. He was one of our group that made the jump to Statesboro together and having that support with me during the transition was great. Now, with moving to Alabama, even though I’m leaving home, I still have it with me because he is my home now.”

Poole’s advice for incoming students is simple: Take every opportunity you can.

“Don’t only take opportunities that are handed to you, but seek them out, “Look for opportunities that would interest you and take them when you get them because they are going to help you grow and make you more competitive when it comes time to enter the workforce. Even if you aren’t getting paid for it, sometimes it helps to have that experience.”

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