



“BE PASSIONATE AND DEDICATED ABOUT WHAT YOU SEEK TO PURSUE, AND NO OBSTACLE WILL BE TOO HARD FOR YOU TO OVERCOME.”

ENGINEERING CHANGE

Professional MBA Student Leads Male-Dominated Industry

Intro by Jessica Navarro; Interview by Amanda Sebesta

Engineering has traditionally been an industry dominated — and led — by men.

Bauer MBA candidate Brooke Thomas-Eben is one of many professionals carving out a space in the field for women.

She started her career as a packaging engineer for Procter & Gamble, working in the Pringles plant. From there, she moved to P&G's headquarters in Cincinnati and transitioned to the commercial side of the business, serving as a product initiative manager for the company, where she led planning, scheduling and coordination for the Always brand.

Thomas-Eben now works for Dow Chemical as a project engineering manager. She began Bauer's Professional MBA program this fall and balances her career and graduate school responsibilities with motherhood — she has a 3-year-old daughter and is expecting a girl this fall.

Q: Tell me about your current role at Dow Chemical. What do you do?

A: I work as a project engineering manager for pipeline and facility projects, managing a team that consists of employees from several different engineering disciplines. Currently, I am working on a half-billion dollar hydrocarbons pipeline and storage facilities project, which will support the construction of a new world-scale hydrocarbons production plant at Dow Texas Operations in Freeport.

Q: Did you always see yourself going this route?

A: I have always wanted to get my MBA. The experience I garnered while in corporate America has been very valuable and has enabled me to define clearly what I enjoy and do not enjoy doing. With this clarity, I have been able

Q: Why did you want to pursue your MBA?

A: Although I have eight years of experience working in industry, I wanted to enhance my level of knowledge on the business side. I also have a keen interest in real estate development. The structure and industry support offered through the college's Graduate Real Estate Program made it clear that Bauer was the right place for me.

Q: What do you want to accomplish after you earn your MBA?

A: My goal is to be highlighted by *Inc.* or *Forbes* as one of the most successful real estate developers in the country. To reach that goal, I will build on the success of my initial experience in the real estate market and strategically develop and acquire multiple real estate deals sourced through my own private firm. I want to be recognized for delivering breakthrough results, building beautiful properties and maintaining an active community presence.

Q: How do you balance and prioritize school, a successful career and family life?

A: Starting school this fall, while pregnant and in a very busy work season, has been challenging. However, I have great support from my spouse (Arnold Eben), whom I met in college while pursuing my engineering degree. We have created a routine that works perfectly for the family. I am very motivated to complete this program so that also helps provide the drive I need to make it work.

Q: What do you do outside of class?

A: I love to travel internationally as frequently as possible. Typically, my husband and I take at least one international trip per year.

Last year, we had the pleasure of visiting several countries in Southeast Asia and the northern part of Australia.

Next year, we have set aside some time in the spring to visit South Africa and Dubai. The myth that having a family prohibits you from traveling is truly just that, a myth. It just takes a little more planning and having great family support.

Q: Have you faced any adversity in your professional career?

A: My role positions me in a male-dominated function. I personally am not intimidated by this environment. I have a good team, and when it's time to have the serious conversations, I maintain a professional composure, but I'm not afraid to address the issue at hand.

Q: What words of encouragement would you give to young women looking to pursue careers in engineering?

A: For all the young women I mentor, I encourage them to follow their passions. That is ultimately the foundation for success at anything you endeavor to do. The quantity of women in engineering has grown significantly. We are still a minority of the total workforce, but are growing exponentially. My message to any young woman is to be passionate and dedicated about what you seek to pursue, and no obstacle will be too hard for you to overcome.