

Matt Pavelchak ('08) shares his experiences in the Honors Program

Matt Pavelchak was born in Dover, NJ and grew up in Green Township, NJ. His father worked for the Post Office. His mother was a property manager for condominium complexes. His sister works in marketing.

Matt graduated from Rowan in 2008 with a Bachelor's degree. He completed a Master's degree at Purdue University in West Lafayette, IN in 2009. He studied load distribution for precast U-beam concrete girders with Professor Frosch in the Robert L. and Terry L. Bowen Laboratory for Large-Scale Civil Engineering Research. Upon graduation, he took a job in Houston, TX, at Walter P. Moore, working in the Diagnostics Group which focuses on assessment, repair, and rehabilitation of existing structures. Matt is now a Principal at Walter P. Moore, still in the Diagnostics Group. He is a licensed Professional Engineer¹ in four states (TX, FL, NY, LA).



Matt claims he is finally getting used to the summers in Texas. His current duties include condition assessments, repair design, forensic analysis, and expert testimony related to structural engineering, foundations, and building enclosure performance. If a client has a problem, e.g., something is cracking or leaking, he uses a combination of visual or non-destructive testing, lab tests, and/or analysis to determine the root cause(s) and extents of the issue(s). He then provides recommendations and designs repairs (if appropriate). Once a solution is designed, he helps the client select a contractor and performs construction administration services for the repairs. Seeing projects from the initial assessment through to the implementation of repairs allows Matt to see the entire project lifecycle. For forensic assignments Matt is sometimes called upon to provide expert testimony as part of the dispute resolution process.

I chose Rowan because of a combination of cost, distance from home, and a positive sense from open houses about the small class size and high faculty engagement. I went to an engineering focused charter high school, the Sussex County Academy for the Advancement of Math and Science. We shared a campus with a Vocational School. I got to take a wide variety of classes, from electronics to computer aided design drafting. That got me interested in pursuing Engineering in college. I'm not exactly sure why I chose Civil and Environmental Engineering, but it probably had to do with seeing the things they design: buildings, bridges, roads, etc.

I participated in the Thomas N. Bantivoglio Honors Concentration and lived in Honors housing for three years, first as a freshman participant, then as a Resident Assistant in Mimosa Hall. I met my future wife in Honors housing my freshman year. I went on to become president of the Honors Student organization. Professor Sukamaran in the Civil and Environmental Engineering department was very involved in the Honors program as a faculty advisor. The program was relatively new when I started. At that time, it could be difficult for engineers to get enough Honors classes to graduate with the concentration, but I persevered and got to be part of the development and strategic planning of the Honors program. In this role I attended several

national conferences to learn about other Honors programs. I met Thomas N. Bantivoglio, Henry Rowan, and Donald Farrish² several times. [Editor's note: As of 2024 there are plenty of honors classes for engineering students, who now comprise a significant percentage of the Honors College. And Honors has its own building on Rowan Boulevard!³]

I'm not sure I appreciated the Engineering Clinic⁴ classes enough at the time, but looking back now the emphasis on speaking and writing is pivotal to my career. I give technical presentations to a wide range of recipients, including people who manage commercial real estate, mediators/attorneys, and various client representatives with both technical and nontechnical backgrounds. A lot of entry level engineers I meet need to work harder at their presentation/writing skills than Rowan graduates. The variety of the clinic topics also helped me develop the ability to pick up something new, assimilate the salient points, and present to others.

My Rowan professors encouraged me to get a graduate degree. I was interested in Structural Engineering and saw that a graduate degree would accelerate my career. I ended up at Purdue with a fellowship/research assistantship that paid for my tuition and provided a stipend for living expenses. Professor Cleary--who is a Purdue alumni--helped coach me in finalizing my grad school plans and applications. It was interesting going from small classes at the undergraduate level at Rowan to similar class sizes at the graduate level at Purdue, but where the undergraduate classes were much larger. Even though the Recession of 2008 was still impacting the economy, I had job offers in Pennsylvania, Chicago, IL, and Houston, TX once I finished the Master's degree.

Based on an Interview with Jess W. Everett on 2024-2-5

1. The Professional Engineer license (PE) is a "standard recognized by employers and their clients, by governments and by the public as an assurance of dedication, skill and quality...Only PEs can sign and seal engineering drawings...To become a Licensed Professional Engineer, you must do four things: graduate from an accredited engineering program, pass the Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) exam, work with a professional engineer for four years, and pass the Principles and Practice of Engineering exam."
2. Thomas N. Bantivoglio was a major donor to the Rowan Honors Concentration, Henry Rowan's 100 Million dollar donation in the 1990 was crucial to the founding of a new engineering college at then Glassboro State College. Donald Farrish was president of the University when Matt attended.
3. Rowan Boulevard is a "one-third mile corridor...lined with shops, restaurants and medical providers at street level with housing, offices and classrooms on the floors above." "The privately funded partnership between Rowan, developers and the Borough of Glassboro has a singular goal: to create a quintessential college town."
4. Engineering Clinic is a hallmark of Rowan University. Students take a Clinic class each semester, eight total. Many are interdisciplinary. All are hands-on. First-year Clinics focus on engineering's place in society and fundamental engineering skills. Sophomore Clinics merge communication coursework with an engineering design experience and are team taught by engineering, writing arts, and rhetoric faculty. Junior and Senior Clinics give students to work in teams an opportunity to work on research or design projects, usually externally funded.