The WISE Program
Setting the Standard

BY BJONG WOLF YEIGH

The Washington Internships for Students of Engineering is a nine-week experiential public policy program designed for engineering students between their junior and senior years in college. Each year, up to 15 students are chosen in a nationwide competition. Since its inception in 1980, 435 engineering students from 147 colleges and universities around the United States have participated in the program. Students experience firsthand how engineers can contribute to public policy processes. Every intern is required to write an extensive policy paper on a technology policy issue, working closely with the sponsoring engineering society.

Over the past 32 years, a number of engineering and science organizations have participated as mentors and sponsors of the WISE program, including these groups:
- American Association of Engineering Societies,
- American Institute of Chemical Engineers,
- American Nuclear Society,
- American Society of Civil Engineers,
- American Society of Electrical Engineers,
- American Society of Mechanical Engineers,
- ASAE,
- ASHRAE,
- ASTM International,
- Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers,
- National Society of Black Engineers,
- National Society of Professional Engineers,
- Operations Research Society of America,
- SAE International, and
- Society of Manufacturing Engineers.

The impact the WISE program has on its interns and in public policy debate is significant. The value of policy papers written by WISE interns ranges from an excellent starting point for a senior thesis to a significant policy document that congressional staff members can use to influence policy debates and laws in Congress. Policy papers written by the interns since 1997 are available at www.wise-intern.org.

Since its inaugural class 32 years ago, the Washington Internships for Students of Engineering program has provided engineering students with a platform to learn about the public policymaking process while contributing to important public policy debates of our time. The students, advisers and the program itself have had a profound impact on this technological, knowledge-based society, and its contributions continue. In May, the WISE family welcomed 13 new interns for the 2012 summer program.

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