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SPECTRUM

FOR THE EMPLOYEES OF GE INFORMATION SERVICES COMPANY

RAY MARSHALL AND BOB HENCH: BACK TO SCHOOL FOR GE



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INFORMATION
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RAY MARSHALL AND BOB HENCH: BACK TO SCHOOL FOR GE

This [robot arm equipment for the Engineering Department] is another indication of the growing relationship between higher education and the private sector. Both GE and Michigan State University have long been regarded as leaders in this type of relationship. What this does is continue to reinforce the linkage between this university, industry, and government. Our destinies are intertwined. We believe in the development of new knowledge, but what is also important is the application of the knowledge to help society solve its problems...

—Michigan State University President
John DiBiaggio

We spent months calling GE...trying to bring a robot on campus. It was only when we interacted with Ray Marshall that things really happened. He read our proposal, thought it was reasonable, came on campus and talked to us, and within two months, we had the beast with us.

—Brian Thompson, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Michigan State University

The relationship between General Electric Company and the College Park campus is an outstanding example of the partnership that can exist between industry and higher education. The GE-University of Maryland partnership has been made possible in large part by the energy and commitment of Bob Hench. I am pleased...[to] recognize and honor his many contributions to the University of Maryland.

—University of Maryland Chancellor
John B. Slaughter

Ray Marshall (Technology Operations) and Bob Hench (Information Processing Technology) have been spending a lot of time in school lately. For the past four and six years, respectively, they have joined key operating managers in other GE components who serve in the Corporate-sponsored Key Engineering School Liaison Executive (KESLE) program.

Like their KESLE counterparts, Ray Marshall and Bob Hench lend their talents to cultivating close, ongoing ties with two of the best engineering schools in the U.S.—Michigan State University and the University of Maryland, respectively. As KESLEs, the two TechOps employees seek to bring the sharpest engineering minds to GE and to help link the universities into GE's educational support programs, such as scholarships, equipment, and professional development opportunities.

Jim D'Acosta (GE Program Manager, University Relations) reports, "The program is definitely a success. We have modernized and elevated our image among students. We now attract higher-caliber students to interviews, and we're hiring the better ones.

"For example, in 1986, the KESLE program generated 44 percent of all new college graduates hired by GE and 54 percent of all engineers hired." (MSU accounted for 13 hires in 1985 and 1986, while Maryland reported 25.)

"Moreover, we're now employing students who have had hands-on experience with GE equipment," Jim D'Acosta notes. "In several cases, students have been hired specifically because of that qualification."

On the cover: Bob Hench (left) and Ray Marshall are GE Information Services' resident KESLEs.

The Headquarters Program

The KESLE program is a multi-faceted attempt to establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships between GE and some of the best U.S. engineering schools. KESLE activities focus on enhancing GE engineering recruiting prospects and on encouraging discussions and contacts among faculty, students, and GE research and engineering professionals. Ray Marshall adds, "There also is some splash into other departments"—journalism, computer sciences, and communications.

Jim D'Acosta, who manages the KESLE program, summarizes the program's recent history by noting, "In the early 1980s, GE was not readily identified on U.S. college campuses as a company on the cutting edge of new technology. Yet, GE needed engineers well-versed in new technologies, and the competition for such people was—and still is—fierce.

"To support that ongoing personnel requirement, we set out to update our image on campus. Based on experience with other programs, we decided to elevate the importance of recruiting the best by assigning key operating managers to establish a regular presence on campuses with engineering schools."

Ray Marshall recalls, "Shortly after Jack Welch came on board, he decided that it was important to upgrade relations between GE and leading U.S. univer-

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sities. He gave a strong new direction—a real shot in the arm—to the KESLE program. He also emphasized support in the form of equipment donations."

The GE Engineering School Equipment Assistance Program (also in Jim D'Acosta's group) channels state-of-the-art products and equipment to colleges, enhancing recruiting and contributing to the much-needed modernization of college engineering facilities. Such donations are based on the school's needs and their congruity with available GE equipment.

In the four years since the program's inception, GE has donated some \$11 million of equipment to over 50 colleges. In 1986, ten GE components supplied over 600 GE and Calma products that were donated to 45 universities. The robotics, automation controls, and Calma CAD/CAM equipment often constitutes the core of automation laboratories serving mechanical, industrial, and electrical engineering departments.



Jim D'Acosta (left), head of GE's KESLE program, was able to attend the University of Maryland luncheon honoring Bob Hench (see accompanying story) and chat with Maryland faculty, including Reese Cleghorn, Dean of the College of Journalism.

The Equipment Assistance Program is an important KESLE resource as well as a means for GE to help maintain the quality of graduates from U.S. engineering schools. A number of studies (by the National Research Council, National Science Foundation, and others) confirm the importance of such equipment to high-quality teaching institutions.

Moreover, some equipment donations yield higher payoffs than originally expected. Jim D'Acosta explains, "We've literally changed the way that engineering is taught by donating videotape equipment (for example, at the University of Colorado, Michigan State University, and the University of Maryland).

"The schools originally planned to use VCRs for playing lecture tapes, recording visiting professors, and taping experiments. Once the video equipment arrived, however, use exploded. The VCR capability has significantly improved teaching effectiveness in ways the schools never considered—for example, students using the equipment to create reports."

The KESLE program also takes advantage of the many GE scholarships that support engineering and science students overall or in specific subgroups (such as minorities, women, and graduate students). KESLEs also refer colleges to the independent GE Foundation, which manages several major grant and forgivable loan programs in support of higher education, including its Program for the '80s, which seeks to increase the number of students who pursue Ph.D.s and subsequently teach science or engineering (see accompanying story on Bob Hench).

The Front Line: KESLEs in Action

KESLEs are selected from the pool of GE corporate officers and operating general managers. Each is assigned to a specific college, taking into account factors such as the types of hires at the KESLE's

component, proximity of the component's offices to the college, and match between the technical foci of the component and the college. Only a few KESLEs are alumni of their assigned colleges; alma mater is not a prime consideration in KESLE assignments.

Each KESLE commits to spend a lot of time on campus, getting to know faculty (particularly deans and department heads), top-flight students, and the university itself. KESLEs are responsible for scheduling and conducting special events on campus. Plans vary according to the characteristics and style of the KESLE and of the college, but many KESLEs employ common approaches, such as:

- Seminars, which bring together faculty, GE technical professionals, other technical experts, and top students to exchange timely information
- Special speakers, often from GE, who share cutting-edge research and application data
- Job fairs and career days, which put students in contact with GE professionals and recruiters
- Group tours of GE facilities—often arranged for one or more KESLE schools—which include discussions with KESLEs, GE technicians, and managers
- Student leadership conferences—often cooperative events staged by several KESLEs—which bring together the student heads of campus groups (particularly engineering, computer science, and science organizations), other promising students, and GE experts in various technical and management fields

The turn-out and local press coverage at Ray Marshall's MSU dedication and the Maryland award to Bob Hench are powerful statements...that's the best recognition...

- Summer jobs and co-op assignments for students who are serious candidates for positions at GE
- Participation on collegiate advisory boards, which generates "immeasurable but important and positive opportunities to supply relevant input to college decisionmakers," according to Jim D'Acosta.

KESLEs place heavy emphasis each year on recruiting one or two of the very best graduates from their schools. KESLEs often take the role of mentor—which can include identifying a high-potential student, interacting one-on-one, contacting other KESLEs and components when necessary to make sure the student is hired for an appropriate position, and following up on hiring-process progress.

"Staying in contact with other components—understanding their hiring needs—is an increasingly high KESLE priority," Ray Marshall says. "Such cross-fertilization is particularly important when some components are hiring and some are not."

Each year, KESLEs gather to exchange information, assess the success of new and ongoing projects at individual colleges, and discuss the next year's overall plan. GE Chairman of the Board Jack Welch addresses the KESLEs and challenges them, for example, to hire one or two of the best at their schools (sparklers) or to work on improving the quality of recruiting teams that visit their campuses.

Annual meeting activities often generate useful working documents such as guidelines to identifying

Ray and Bob have the special challenge of getting two messages across...that GE is a leader in high-tech services and that such services will become increasingly important...

and working with sparklers and a resource book that includes a review of KESLE accomplishments, key issues, recruiting results, and tips on accelerating the hiring process.

The Importance of Being KESLEs

The GE-wide KESLE team makes an important contribution to the professional and recruiting proficiency of the company—and Ray Marshall and Bob Hench are both typical and exceptional KESLEs.

Jim D'Acosta says, "The turn-out and local press coverage at Ray Marshall's MSU dedication and the Maryland award to Bob Hench are powerful statements. When the schools that KESLEs work with recognize and appreciate their work—that's the best recognition. And it helps us build momentum.

"Ray Marshall and Bob Hench also stand in a unique position as two of the few KESLEs who represent GE's high-tech service business. GE Information Services is a premier example of GE's high-tech service—one of the forerunners of a whole new arena in which engineers will have non-traditional careers.

"Ray and Bob have the special challenge of getting two messages across to engineering faculty and students: that GE is a leader in high-tech services and that such services will become increasingly important as the U.S. shifts away from manufacturing and focuses more on services." ▲

