

SIUE Women Engineers Gain First-Hand Look into Motorsport Industry

by Kalli Collins

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EDWARDSVILLE – Six female engineering students from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville had the opportunity to get a behind-the-scenes look into motorsports at PNC's Girls Day at the track. Held in partnership with Chip Ganassi Racing, the event took place during the Bommarito Automotive Group 500 qualifying event at the [World Wide Technology Raceway](#) on Saturday, Aug. 26.

The SIUE students met Scott Dixon, driver of the number 9 PNC Bank Honda, six-time IndyCar champion and winner of the 2008 Indianapolis 500. They also had the opportunity to connect with Dixon's gearbox mechanic Anna Chatten.

"Due to women in engineering being a minority, it's rare for a woman in engineering to hear about a day in the life of another woman engineer directly, especially one who works on race cars," said Katherine Schneider, sophomore mechanical engineering major from Red Bud. "Thanks to Anna, I was able to learn more about how the paddle shift system on the detachable steering wheel works with a certain order of gears in the gearbox to maximize the acceleration of the car."

Schneider was ecstatic to get a glimpse into the fast-paced environment since she hopes to join the aerospace industry and work on fighter jets after completing her degree at SIUE.

"Words cannot compare to experiencing women in the engineering environment firsthand," Schneider continued. "I never realized how amazing it was to be a part of an industry that focuses heavily on teamwork, problem-solving and inclusivity for the sole purpose of innovation until I physically saw it with my own eyes."

Schneider, who is part of SIUE's Society of Women Engineers (SWE), was joined by fellow students Lauren Clasquin, electrical engineering major from Highland; Ximena Gonzalez, computer engineering major from Edwardsville; Emma Griebenow, computer engineering major from DeKalb, Lila Humphrey, mechanical engineering major from Farmington, Mo.; and Avery Stilwell, electrical engineering major from Troy.

"This was a great opportunity provided by the PNC bank for our SWE students to be part of the engineering side of motor racing," added Amardeep Kaur, PhD, associate professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering. "This gave our students an opportunity to learn about engineering careers for women beyond traditional offerings. The students were excited to get access to engineering aspects of Chip Ganassi's team as part of their efforts to bring more female engineering voices to their team. Spending time on the raceway and in the [team's](#) paddock was fun for them."

The [School of Engineering](#) offers one of the most comprehensive and affordable engineering programs in the St. Louis region with eight undergraduate degrees, five master's degrees and two cooperative doctoral programs, all housed in a state-of-the-art facility. Students learn from expert faculty, perform cutting-edge research and participate in intercollegiate design competitions. Companies in the metropolitan St. Louis area provide students challenging internships and co-op opportunities, which often turn into permanent employment.

