



Darryl M. Fraser (left), retired vice president, communications for Northrop Grumman Corporation, presents a ceremonial check to NSBE 2015–16 National Chair Neville Green, during the 2016 NSBE Golden Torch Awards Ceremony, in Boston, Mass. The grant is funding the Northrop Grumman Foundation/NSBE Integrated Pipeline Program. (March 26, 2016)

Northrop Grumman Foundation/NSBE Scholars Named

\$2-Million Partnership with HBCUs Aims to Widen the Pipeline to Engineering Careers

By Kevin M. Briscoe

“...Programs such as this one are crucial to graduating Black Engineers by providing professional, academic and financial support to those (who) might not otherwise have access.” – Sebrenia Coleman, Florida A&M University

Anounced at NSBE’s 42nd Annual Convention in Boston, in March 2016, the Northrop Grumman Foundation/NSBE Integrated Pipeline Program aims to provide 72 engineering students with \$8,000 scholarship grants, internship opportunities with leading STEM corporations and year-round academic and professional development support. Funded by the Northrop Grumman Foundation to the tune of \$2 million over three years, the program is partnering with three Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) – Florida A&M University, Howard University and North Carolina A&T University – to advance NSBE’s continuing efforts to increase the number of Black Engineers.

“In the effort to get the U.S. to NSBE’s goal of graduating 10,000 new Black Engineers annually by 2025, we designed a program that had multiple touch points in the collegiate demographic,” says Ralanda Nelson, NSBE’s Collegiate and Professional Programs manager. “Research from the United Negro College Fund has shown that scholarships of \$5,000 or more increase African-American graduation rates by 8 percentage points. Assisting in the recruitment, matriculation, retention and graduation of our members is paramount for NSBE.

“Six of the top 10 producers of black engineering bachelor’s degree recipients last year were HBCUs,” Nelson continues, “and HBCUs as a whole produce about 40 percent of Black Engineers. Supporting these institutions in their successful efforts was the responsible thing to do. Northrop Grumman recognized this need, as well, and supported our vision for the program.”

The first cohort of 24 Northrop Grumman Foundation/NSBE scholars was selected in December, and their participation in the program will kick off with a summit meeting this March, during NSBE’s 43rd Annual Convention in Kansas City, Mo. All of this year’s scholars are sophomores concentrating in computer science or computer, mechanical, electrical or industrial/systems engineering.

CRUCIAL SUPPORT

“As a newly selected member of the (Northrop Grumman Foundation/NSBE) scholars program, I am looking forward to countless professional development and networking opportunities in the coming years,” says Sebrenia Coleman, a computer engineering major at Florida A&M (FAMU). “...Programs such

as this one are crucial to graduating Black Engineers by providing professional, academic and financial support to those (who) might not otherwise have access.”

Leslie Winston, a computer engineering major at North Carolina A&T, adds: “I am truly grateful and ecstatic to have been selected as a member of the first cohort of Northrop Grumman Foundation/NSBE scholars. The program’s scholarship funding, workshops, mentorships and various other resources offered by...NSBE will undoubtedly allow me to succeed not only in the classroom but as a professional engineer, as I begin to develop my career path. Words cannot describe how thankful I am for the opportunity.”

When asked why it is important to have programs to create more engineers of color, a few of the cohort members responded in a way that looks beyond their own self-empowerment.

“There is definitely a lack of diversity and representation when it comes to engineers of color. Having more (engineers of color) could serve as encouragement and motivation for the younger generation,” says Brittany Ohalet, a computer science major at Howard University. “Young kids grow up (with) hopes (of being) like the people (who) preceded them, which is why I feel so many young black males look to sports as their way out. There are so many success stories of black athletes, and that’s all you know. Having a program like this could definitely help to bring more people of color into the tech space.”

Coleman agreed: “Within the black community, I believe there is a large amount of untapped potential, especially as it pertains to STEM fields. A true lack of exposure to STEM is preventing many young black students from even considering an education and career in science, technology, engineering or mathematics. It is important to have programs that create more engineers of color...so that our dreams may come to fruition through financial, academic and professional support.”

The grants are a part of a larger institutional capacity-building program to build upon and support the efforts of the selected HBCUs to recruit, retain and graduate more black engineering students. At present, the program includes FAMU, Howard and North Carolina A&T. Plans to include additional HBCUs and non-HBCU institutions are under consideration. ■

Kevin M. Briscoe is a writer based in Atlanta, Ga., and a former editor of NSBE Magazine.