



Honoring Marion Blalock

First female national chairperson of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE)



The National Society of Black Engineers mourns the passing of Marion W. Blalock, a decades-long member of NSBE's National Advisory Board and a vital force for NSBE since before the Society was founded.

As an undergraduate and one of the few Black women attending Purdue University in the late 1960s, Blalock was part of the student movement toward greater diversity and inclusion at Purdue that later gave birth to NSBE. In the mid-1970s, she worked with the first head of Purdue's Industrial Engineering school, Harold T. Amrine, and with an African American engineering professor, Arthur J. Bond, to launch Purdue's effort to recruit more minority engineering students, while Dr. Bond was also advising a small group of African American engineering students to begin the organization that soon became NSBE.

During her 34-year tenure as director of Purdue's Minority Engineering Program (1974-2008), the University became a national leader in producing African American engineers, while Blalock encouraged and pushed thousands of collegiate and pre-collegiate students to choose and stay on the path to engineering careers.

Although we grieve in her absence, we pledge not to remain forever in mourning over the loss of Marion W. Blalock. We promise, instead, to honor her life by continuing the work she engaged in with such passion.

NSBE Luv for Marion:

“Marion Blalock was a “servant warrior”, an iron fist in a velvet glove. I met her when she was an associate dean at Purdue and was quite frankly surprised when she moved to the Minority Engineering Program (MEP). Her impact on the lives of students over the next 30+ years is undeniable. If you needed a pat on the back, she was there; if you needed a kiss on the cheek, she was there; if you needed a slap on the head, she was there. She truly cared about the students in her charge, and always kept it “100”!

Her contributions to NSBE were immeasurable. We served together on NSBE’s National Advisory Board (NAB) for over 20 years, and her no-nonsense style never wavered. Her advice was uncensored, and she didn’t suffer fools gladly, while at the same time being the physical embodiment of “NSBE Luv”. I am so proud to have called her my friend.

Marion, you have fought the good fight, you have kept the faith, and you have finished the race. Well done, good and faithful servant. You will not be forgotten...”

- NSBE Founder, Tony Harris

Marion Blalock served as a stabilizing force for Purdue University's Minority Engineering Program, and as a mentor for NSBE members when such leadership was really needed. In the mid-1970s, NSBE had just been established, the Founders were graduating and managing their lives, and a number of Purdue's faculty and administrative advisors were undergoing career transitions. Marion was clearly the "adult in the room" for many, was the reliable conduit for those of us who needed to engage with NSBE, and established programs that proved valuable to engineers everywhere.

My prayers for Marion, her family, and loved ones.

- NSBE Founder, Ed Coleman

I am eternally grateful for Marion Blalock’s dedication to the NSBE Mission. She lived a life of purpose and service. She was a great contributor to the improvement we have seen in the diversity of Black engineering professionals.

Ms. Blalock was widely know for setting high expectations and holding her mentees accountable for their actions. Lady Marion believed in the students she counseled. Her advice also touched Purdue faculty, corporate recruiters, and pre-college STEM educators.

While Marion Blalock will be missed, her legacy will live on through the corporate careers of the countless minority engineering students and professionals she mentored at Purdue University and beyond.

- NSBE Founder, George Antoin Smith

Transitioning from a Chicago inner-city high school to college in West Lafayette Indiana was challenging as I experienced stark changes in my environment, tackled difficult courses, and faced financial burdens. Marion Blalock played a key role in addressing all of those hurdles. She represented the minority interest, advocated for fairness, provided resources, and developed a support network. Marion's tenacity and dedication paved the way for the legacy of minority inclusion in the School of Engineering at Purdue University. I will always be grateful for the encouragement, the relentless prying, and the exposure to a limitless world of possibilities Throughout the decades of her career, Marion mapped the road to success for the students of color she served. For that, a great many of Purdue's past, present, and future Engineering and Technology professionals, just like me, are undoubtedly thankful!

- Michelle Spencer, Engineering and Technology Professional, Purdue Graduate

I would like to express my sincere condolences to the Blalock family with the passing of Marion Blalock. I pray that during the days, weeks, and months that follow, the family can take comfort in knowing that Marion touched countless lives within the engineering community.

As a staunch advocate for NSBE at Purdue University, nationally and internationally Marion's fingerprints will leave lasting evidence of the countless contributions she made during her career. I would imagine the many students that Marion came to know through the years are undoubtedly grateful for her guidance.

- NSBE Co-Founder, Brian Harris