

Paving the Road to Success

Kayleigh Cowles was one of the first students to complete four years of the Engineering Magnet Program at Riley High School in South Bend, Indiana. The PLTW coursework and assignments inspired Kayleigh to pursue a career in engineering and provided access to experienced engineers, internships, and scholarships. She became interested in civil engineering after taking the PLTW Civil Engineering and Architecture course at Riley her junior year. Kayleigh said, "I knew I wanted to be a civil engineer after taking the civil engineering and architecture class at Riley."

After graduation, Kayleigh went on to pursue a civil engineering degree from Purdue University. Kayleigh credits the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) civil engineer she interviewed for her Principles of Engineering (POE) course for introducing her to INDOT's Engineering Scholarship Program. During her time at Purdue University, Kayleigh participated in three internship rotations as part of INDOT's Engineering Scholarship Program. The first rotation was in construction, working on the Capital Ave railroad underpass in Mishawaka and overseeing the installation of all drainage structures for the project. Her second year with INDOT involved road design in the Greenfield district where she drew plans for culvert replacement on State Road 32. Her third internship rotation was in hydraulics at INDOT's central office in downtown Indianapolis. There she worked on 15-20 small structure replacements, several drainage complaints and used data to size pipes and make recommendations to the designer.

In addition to the INDOT internship, Kayleigh was involved in the Purdue Student Engineering Foundation (PSEF) and Phi Sigma Rho. PSEF recruits high school students for Purdue Engineering by giving tours, sitting on student panels, giving presentations, and hosting design competitions. Phi Sigma Rho is a social sorority for engineers. Kayleigh served as the VP of Finance for PSEF in 2011 and the Director of Formal Recruitment for Phi Sigma Pho in 2012. In 2013, as the director of associate member education for Phi Sigma Pho, she was responsible for leading new girls through the pledge process.



Kayleigh recently graduated from Purdue University with a B.S. in Civil Engineering where she earned semester honors, participated in the Honors First Year Engineering program, and was a recipient of the Trustee's award. She is currently working a full-time position in INDOT's Graduate Engineer Development Program. This program is a year-long rotational program through 16 different engineering offices, and at the end of the rotation she will choose a permanent position with INDOT. To date, she has rotated through the Traffic Management Center and Highway Design and has expressed her enthusiasm for the program.

PLTW and Riley High School are proud of Kayleigh Cowles accomplishments and wish her all the best in the future.