

MMA

MMA Scholarship Spotlight

Mississippi State's Emily Porterfield has a bright future in manufacturing

You could say Mississippi State senior Emily Porterfield was born to be an engineer.

"My dad is a mechanical engineer so I kinda always knew about engineering," Porterfield said. "And I always really enjoyed math and science so I always thought that was a possibility for me."

"I found I really enjoyed being given a problem or project and then working through it to find the best solution. And then I realized industrial engineering would give me that education and the skills necessary to go down this career path."

Her career path is being fostered over 400 miles from home. Porterfield, who hails from St. Louis, Missouri, said she knew it would take a special place to get her to move out of state, and that special place turned out to be MSU.

"I visited Mississippi State and I was really impressed with the industrial engineering department and the professors," she said. "I saw how much they invest and support their students. I saw how Mississippi State is kind of a sense of family and [they show] support for their students which was important for me if I was going to be so far away from home."

"The generosity of the Mississippi Manufacturers Association and their investment in my education means I'm able to follow my dreams" - Emily Porterfield

Porterfield's interest in manufacturing began last year in Dalton, Georgia, during an industrial engineering co-op with flooring manufacturer Shaw Industries. She worked as an industrial engineer in the Industrial Engineering and Process Improvements Department, and her performance made a lasting impression on her Plant Manager, Emily Lightsey.

"When Emily came here, she was asked to do several projects. She was asked to do a job study on our supervisors, which can be very difficult to do. She brought back information showing us that our supervisors assigned well," said Lightsey. "We had a new piece of equipment come in. She was asked to develop efficiencies for that piece of equipment. She literally went back on her own and learned what the equipment was supposed to do. She even went as far to call the vendor and get information on the capability of that piece of equipment."

"The fact that she took it on her own to call the vendor and find out what the machine specifications were is really unusual for anyone that's going to a co-op. So for her to do that was exceptional."

Porterfield's exceptional work as an intern was given in a field dominated by men. According to The Manufacturing Institute, women account for less than 33 percent of manufacturing workers. And, according to Catalyst, which is a global nonprofit that emphasizes progress for women in the workplace, only 26 percent of bachelor's degrees in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields are held by women. Lightsey said she hopes Porterfield can inspire other women to choose this industry as a career.

"I would like to see her not only become a divisional lead, but maybe make the decision to be a plant manager one day. She has that potential," said Lightsey. "You know, you see women, most of the time [in manufacturing], they're in administration. Even if they're at an upper level, they're in administration. For her to have what she has here and to be able to break some of those barriers, I think it would be wonderful to see her do that at any company."

Porterfield said she was grateful to work for Lightsey and to know she can excel in manufacturing.

"I really looked up to her when I was there," Porterfield said. "I was able to see how she was able to lead the entire plant and she was always very open to me. I was always able to go talk with her and I really appreciate that experience and internship with her."

And soon it will be time for Porterfield to start her career. She is set to graduate from Mississippi State in the spring and she said her scholarship from the Mississippi Manufacturers Association played a key role in her success as a student.

"The generosity of the Mississippi Manufacturers Association and their investment in my education means I'm able to follow my dreams," Porterfield said. "This scholarship has helped me to relieve some of the financial burden of being an out-of-state tuition and has



allowed me to focus on my studies instead of a full-time job.

“I’m very grateful for this scholarship and the opportunity to say thank you to everyone who made this scholarship possible.”

About the MMA Endowment Scholarship

In celebration of its 60th anniversary in 2011, the Mississippi Manufacturers Association (MMA) established the Mississippi Manufacturers Association Endowed Scholarship fund at the following universities:

- **Jackson State University**
- **Mississippi State University**
- **The University of Mississippi**
- **The University of Southern Mississippi**

Checks in the amount of \$60,000 were presented to each university in December 2011 and January 2012 to fund the endowments. The endowment funds will provide annually two \$1,000 academic scholarships to students who are classified as juniors, with at least a 3.0 grade point average, and have declared majors as follows:

- **Jackson State University** - manufacturing & design technology
- **Mississippi State University** - industrial and systems engineering in the Bagley College of Engineering
- **University of Mississippi** - degrees in areas of study within the Center for Manufacturing Excellence at Ole Miss
- **University of Southern Mississippi** - degrees in areas of study within the School of Polymers and High Performance Materials or in the Industrial Technology engineering program

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