

BELONGING IN *ceat*

with Robert Owens, III



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Programs



Robert Owens, III is a rising sophomore majoring in Electrical and Computer Engineering in the College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology (CEAT) at Oklahoma State University (OSU).

Robert has had an interest in electronics for as long as he can remember. At a young age, he was fascinated with how things were built and how they worked. When he learned he could major in electrical and computer engineering, Robert was all in.

When seeking where to obtain his electrical and computer engineering degree, Robert toured a number of engineering colleges and

universities. After touring CEAT, Robert felt OSU had the growth and opportunities he was looking for in a community and undergraduate research. When Robert enrolled, he felt confident that he would be able to learn from professionals; to create a strong foundation for his future career in electronics and systems.

Robert shared, that his academic experience has not been what he expected. He never imagined he would be learning during a pandemic. Robert described his overall experience in comparison to mining; that there is a constant grinding and at times a sense of hopelessness. Or even thoughts of

quitting, only to realize the canary is still singing. So, there is still hope.

Completing his second year, Robert has a clearer picture of his courses. He understands that the courses build on each other and that the knowledge he gains is foundational for his future courses.

Challenges Robert faced were, being in the top 10 percent of his high school class only to realize his school system did not properly prepared him for a major in STEM.

In his first course at OSU, Robert struggled with imposter syndrome because many of his peers were ahead and better than him. He



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learned to press through the doubts and to learn from upper class students. Utilizing all his resources to make up for lost time, Robert now feels he has the mindset to finish strong in completing his degree.

Robert shared that many people have played an important part in his academic career and that they know who they are; Yokolanda Speight, Coordinator of CEAT's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Programs and Kristal Junkins, his academic advisor. Robert said, during his lows, they kept in contact with him, had honest conversations and when discussing his classes had his best interest in mind. Robert feels the relationships he has made in and outside of OSU are priceless and he is thankful for everyone of them.

Robert is involved in three CEAT student organizations; CEAT Student Council, Engineers Without Borders, and the CEAT Mentor Program. He enjoys these organizations because he can give back through speaking and encouraging the next generation of CEAT students. Robert likes to share advice and resources to help

students get ahead. Also, he understands the intensity of CEAT programs and the importance of someone knowing what he are going through and how that made a world of difference.

Robert's struggles and mistakes have taught him a lot and he wants to support incoming students to hopefully keep them from making the same mistakes.

Advice Robert would give to anyone interested in a degree in engineering, architecture or engineering technology is to never quit. To understand that you will not ace everything and that the good things in life require hard work and dedication. He continues, that there will be many times where it feels like life is not fair and when that happens talk with someone. Bottling your emotions will often lead to unwanted outburst later. Also, ask yourself, "If this is what I want to do?" Or "Am I happy here." Your mental health matters and you deserve to be happy.

Robert believes inclusion is about

being involved in activities. He read somewhere, that diversity is being invited to the party and inclusion is being asked to dance .

Everyone has something to say, but some never get the chance or are too scared. Robert believes in taking those chances and not waiting or expecting someone to do things for him.

Robert belongs in CEAT because everyone belongs in CEAT. "We all have something to contribute."

Belonging In CEAT is a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion publication that highlights academic experiences of students in the College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology at Oklahoma State University.

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