

ALUM PROFILE

MESA Engineer succeeds, gives back

FOR MANY UNDERGRADS, the quest for the perfect major can be stressful and filled with uncertainty. Luckily for Brianna Lutes, all that trepidation was avoided.

At San Diego State University, Lutes switched from computer engineering to civil engineering and wasn't certain she'd made the right choice until she participated in a MESA Shadow Day.

"I was able to see that, yes, I had chosen the right major to switch to," the 24 year old said. "Shadow Days after that helped me figure out what I did and didn't like from all the different specialties in engineering."

Lutes now designs potable and wastewater pipelines for Infrastructure Engineering Corporation, an engineering and construction management consulting firm based in the San Diego area.

"I think I'd still be struggling to get an engineering degree or I wouldn't be in engineering at all if I weren't in MESA," she said. "The program kept me on track and provided support that I didn't get anywhere else. The workshops and tutoring helped me get through the physics and math courses at the beginning that I was struggling with."

"I can show the students just like me that, yeah, it's hard, but keep working and you'll make it."

Lutes' MESA career began in 10th grade when she heard about the program from

friends at Chula Vista High School. She always did well in math classes but wasn't particularly interested in the subject and knew nothing about engineering.

"I went to a meeting with them just to go and ended up joining," she said. "I think no matter who you are, MESA offers something that impacts all students."

San Diego State center director Theresa Garcia said throughout her time at SDSU, Lutes was very active in MESA.

"During her last two semesters, Brianna volunteered about 10 hours a week at the office here," Garcia said. "She filled in when budget cuts made us lose personnel. We really needed her."

As a professional engineer, Lutes continues to give back to MESA as a guest speaker and Industry Advisory Board member and company representative. She organizes the Shadow Day at Infrastructure Engineering Corporation.

"Now I can help those who helped me. It's a way for me to give back to MESA and show the students who were just like me that, yeah, it's hard, but keep working and you'll make it." ■

COURTESY OF BRIANNA LUTES

