MANDATORY CO-OP
LEADS TO VOLUNTARY EXPERIENCE

Agubosim "Best" Chinonso truly lives up to his nickname of "Best" in school, at work and in the community.
The University of Toledo (UT) sophomore chemical engineering student is at the top of his class with a 4.0 grade point average and excelling as a co-op student at the Anderson Development Company in Adrian, Michigan. Best shared, "When I received my acceptance from the College of Engineering at UT, I had already decided that if I didn’t like the school by the end of the first semester, I would transfer. However, once arriving at UT there was no doubt I am here to stay! The college has excellent faculty and staff who take care of you like family. Being an international co-op student has enabled me to gain workplace experience while earning money for the next semester’s tuition. Growing up in Nigeria, I never dreamed I would be able to have the opportunities I have been afforded by the UT College of Engineering and the Anderson Development Company."

Best shared that UT had many of the qualities he was looking for when researching universities. Some of those factors included the size of the university, the research focus of the college (alternative energy), the diversity of the campus and college, and the quick response he received while researching the different institutions. Additionally, the mandatory co-op program, reputation and affordability proved to be the deciding factors when choosing the college of choice. "I have always wanted to study chemical engineering because of my interest in energy resources. University of Toledo is a right-sized school where academic excellence is highly emphasized through undergraduate research, mandatory Co-op/Internships, and other activities geared towards academic excellence. In addition to these qualities, the presence of the Polymer Institute, and the Graduate school ranking in 2006 also influenced my decision to attend the University of Toledo."

Best works with a team of individuals who have made such a difference in his work environment, along with fellow chemical engineering and senior co-op student Jeremy Runk. Best and Jeremy's immediate supervisor, Mr. Tom Blaine, was a former
UT College of Engineering alumnus who also participated in the mandatory co-op program and was an avid member of the UT marching band. He too felt that UT was like home and that the mandatory co-op program and the college's reputation was a deciding factor when choosing UT. Mr. Ron Michalak, Director of Human Resources at Anderson, is also a UT alumnus and holds several degrees from the institution. Ron stated, "When Anderson decided to go to a formalized co-op program I consulted with our Director of Operations, Mr. Hershel Irwin. Mr. Irwin's solution was for Anderson to "go back to the well" and tap into one of UT's greatest resources - their engineering co-op students. "Mr. Irwin is also a UT College of engineering alumnus and believed that the resources we needed were right in our backyard. Thanks to that advice we now have a fully integrated and planned co-op program at our company that is budgeted year-after-year."

According to Best and Jeremy, their responsibilities are varied, and they are open to opportunities every day and are living experiences they would have not received in the classroom. Best's primary role in the company is Process Safety Management, with Jeremy spending half of his time with Best. Best is involved in a variety of assignments that are of great relevance to chemical engineering. He is currently working with an engineering team on a Process Safety and Management project. This involves documentation and compilation of information on process safety equipments. Documentation includes: sizing calculations, mass and energy balance, and safety system interlocks. He is also working on production tracking duties where process variables such as yields, purity, and reaction times are constantly being monitored. This tracking helps the engineering team in making adjustments in improving the overall efficiency of the processes. Best has also done a cost analysis project for the condensate/steam recovery systems. "My primary goal is to acquire sufficient knowledge in the field of Chemical Engineering that will enable me make an important contributions both to my profession and to our society. Learning about the Co-op requirements and the fact that this experience will be vital in helping me achieve my aim, I desired a Co-Op position in the field of Chemical engineering that will nurture my classroom education by providing me with classroom experience. During my interview with Anderson Development Company, I found out that Anderson Development Company is not just an award winning specialty chemical manufacturer; it is also a learning organization. The prospect of working on real life projects was especially appealing to me. Having worked here thus far, I must say that Anderson Development Company has helped me exceed my expectations as a student."

The remainder of Jeremy's time is in the Production Tracking System. Jeremy shared that their work is centered on chemicals, yields, temperatures and tracking formation to analyze as part of the process. "Safety is of utmost importance to Anderson and we live, eat and breathe it here. One of the first things I learned when I joined the Anderson team was to keep my mouth closed when checking pipes - otherwise you may end up eating your product!" (Continued on next page)
After work, Best and Jeremy's paths take different turns. Jeremy travels back to Toledo where he resides with his wife. Best travels to the Adrian Boys and Girls Club where he volunteers to mentor and tutor boys and girls in mathematics and assists high school students for preparation for the ACT test. When asked why with an already hectic work schedule, he would do this, Best replied, “This is an opportunity for me to give back to society and to show these young boys and girls how to appreciate the life they have been given. Growing up I had no siblings and had no one to help me. This is my way of giving back what I needed when I was their age.” Best works predominantly with eight-year olds and finds it is an enriching experience not only for the children, but for him as well. He also indicated that it is rewarding to work with high school students and encourage them to go into the field of engineering and not be afraid of math.

What are the next steps for Best and Jeremy? Jeremy will begin the process of a job search with assistance from the College of Engineering Career Placement Office. Thanks to full-time placement associate director, Andrea Joldrichsen, Jeremy will be provided job opportunities on a regular basis as well as interview opportunities. All of these services continue not only for current students but for alumni as well. Additionally, the Engineering Career Management Office hosts and supports fall and spring Career Expos with interviewing taking place the day after the event for future co-op and job placement opportunities. The Career Expo normally hosts 75 - 110 engineering companies. Director Dr. Vickie Kuntz, who leads the Career Management Center at the University of Toledo, College of Engineering, states, “Our Engineering Career Expo is very popular with our employers. Due to the large number of employers requesting interviews with our students the day after this event, we have increased our interviewing time from one to two days. We have an excellent placement rate in our college.”

Best will return to UT for the next semester of classroom experiences and will work with the Career Management Center for his next co-op opportunity. No matter where he goes a part of his time will always be spent giving back. “Best has certainly made the most of his time while co-oping at Anderson Development while contributing to the Adrian community,” states Dr. Nagi G. Naganathan, Dean of the College of Engineering. “Co-op experience is an important element of an ecosystem we have designed around our engineering students at The University of Toledo. Best is a fine example of why mandatory co-op was designed for our students and the added value to their educational pursuits. The fact that he also chose to give back to the Adrian community speaks highly of the quality of person Best is and I am sure will continue to be. UT Engineering students have a reputation for getting involved in student government, service organizations and volunteerism. It is no wonder that Best felt right at home when he arrived on our campus.”

By Christine M. Smallman
Senior Manager of Marketing Services
The University of Toledo