

Intern to Engineer – Testimonial for the AFRL Scholars Career Forum



The AFRL Scholars Program held its fourth annual Career Forum in June 2017 and was attended by over 90 scholars and 10 STEM industry employers. One of the representatives for Lockheed Martin was former AFRL Scholars Program intern, Lucas Cantero. Lucas was an AFRL Scholars Program intern in the summer of 2015 and attended the Career Forum that year. He listened in on one of the group presentations with Lockheed Martin, asked a few questions, and signed-up for an individual interview held at the Forum. Lucas interviewed with a scientist with the Advanced Technology Center (ATC) at Lockheed Martin, and provided a resume detailing his experience and qualifications.

Lucas later applied to a controls position with LM Space Systems Company sometime early in the following fall semester, and was flown to Sunnyvale, California, for an interview in November. According to Cantero, “It turned out to be a hiring event with many applicants there for various positions being interviewed.” Cantero shared that his interviews went well, but he still was not offered a position. Nonetheless, someone unrelated to the position representing ATC noticed “optics” on his resume and called him over for an impromptu interview at the end of the day.

A week later, Lucas had a phone interview with the recruitment representative from the ATC Phenomenology group. Cantero returned to California in December for a day of interviews with several ATC employees and managers of varied background, but mostly optics, phenomenology, and controls. He was also asked to deliver a presentation on his research, which focused on the controls work he did at AFRL during his 2015 internship. One of the ATC managers who interviewed Cantero was the scientist from the AFRL Career Forum, and he remembered Cantero from the event. Shortly after the holiday break, Lucas was offered a position as a Research Scientist in the Controls Group.

When asked about the impact attending the 2015 Career Forum had on his career and getting a job at Lockheed, Cantero stated, “I absolutely believe the Career Forum helped me to get the job I did. Not only for the interaction and subsequent networking I had with [the scientist] and ATC, but also by giving me an opportunity to formulate my work at AFRL in a way that I could sell to potential employers before the hiring cycle for the next year began.”

Cantero had a unique perspective on attending the 2017 Career Forum and shared, “I didn’t realize it as a scholar, but as a recruiter it was so obvious that the talent pool at the event was extraordinary. Everyone there has effectively already been vetted just by being a scholar and are working on fantastic projects. I was left fascinated by everyone I spoke to.”