Safe-D, ATLAS Internship Program Under Way at TTI

Nine undergraduate students from various backgrounds with an interest in transportation safety have been selected for a unique, 10-week summer internship with TTI as part of the Advancing Transportation Leadership and Safety (ATLAS) and Safety Through Disruption (Safe-D) University Transportation Centers.

"Safe-D research projects over the next five years will focus on those transportation disruption areas that include automation, connectivity, transportation as a service and big data analytics," explains Sue Chrysler, TTI senior research scientist and Safe-D associate director.

The undergraduate students, who hail from Texas, Vermont, Virginia and Puerto Rico, are paired with a TTI mentor and will get hands-on experience assisting with a research project. They'll also be responsible for writing a technical paper and producing a professional poster about the project. TTI Associate Research Scientist Laura Higgins runs the summer internship for both Safe-D and ATLAS.

"I was in a terrible car accident a few years ago and suffered a lot of physical trauma," says Christian Estela, a senior industrial engineering major at Texas A&M University and one of the summer interns. "Taking a human factors class really opened my eyes to transportation safety. As soon as I saw this internship opportunity, I knew it was right for me."

Standing, left to right: Quang Le (Texas A&M), Arwah Al-Kahtani (Texas A&M), TTI Senior Research Scientist Sue Chrysler, TTI Agency Director Greg Winfree, Christian Estela (Texas A&M), Luis Sevillano (University of Puerto Rico Mayaguez), Lizzie Clark (Virginia Tech) and Daniel Khuat (Texas A&M).

Sitting, left to right: Rachel Sable (Virginia Tech), Andrew Peretin (Virginia Tech), Ryan Augustine (University of Vermont) and TTI Associate Research Scientist Laura Higgins.

"Transportation safety is a very complicated subject," Robert Wunderlich, director of TTI's Center for Transportation Safety and ATLAS associate director, told the students. "It's going to take different perspectives to really make improvements. The challenge is big. And we are really glad that you are here to help us with that. We hope this experience will inspire you." ■

TTI's SEC Lab Receives Prestigious International Recognition

TTI's Sediment and Erosion Control Laboratory (SEC Lab) was awarded the Environmental Excellence Award during the International Erosion Control Association (IECA) annual conference and expo in Atlanta, Ga., Feb. 22. As IECA's premiere recognition, the Environmental Excellence Award "recognizes an outstanding stormwater and erosion and/or sediment control project, program or operation that demonstrates excellence in natural resource conservation and environmental protection."

"This is a true honor because everyone in our industry is familiar with the award and knows its significance," says TTI Assistant Research Scientist Jett McFalls, who manages the SEC Lab.

Established in 1990, the SEC Lab covers 19 acres at Texas A&M University's RELLIS Campus and includes indoor rain simulators, a sediment retention device flume and a variable slope channel flume. Other equipment includes a 2,800-square-foot climate-controlled greenhouse and a small-footprint stormwater quality structure.

McFalls credits the Texas Department of Transportation for its environmental efforts and its ongoing support of the SEC Lab.

"This award for TTI's SEC Lab is long overdue," Michael Harding, a well-known and respected environmental scientist and former IECA president, says. He nominated the lab for the award. "The lab is top notch and has set the standard for the industry. It truly is a game changer and needed to be recognized for its leadership in erosion control and its contributions to the environment." ■