



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

Shani Jamila Allison '01



To Shani Jamila Allison for her outstanding contributions to the Penn State engineering community, and for championing diversity and technical excellence.

If you're willing to work hard, then being an engineer is a reachable goal, Shani Allison advises girls who are considering a major in engineering. "You can be a straight-A student in high school but get lower grades in college," she tells them. "It's going to take some extra work in your freshman year to learn how to navigate through college and get a high GPA, but the result is worth it."

Allison puts in countless hours in support of young women and minorities who want to be tomorrow's engineers. A project management analyst for Ford Motor Company, she said she benefited from the support of others while she was in college. That is why it's essential to her that she gives back to others in any way she can. Allison embraces the words of Jackie Robinson: "A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives."

Born in Detroit and raised in Pittsburgh, Allison decided in high school to follow in her father's footsteps and study engineering. Drawn to the problem-solving aspect of the field, Allison credits

her parents for making sure she was academically prepared for a rigorous academic program. Her parents believed that education was very important to being successful in life and instilled in her and her brother, Darius Allison '07, the determination to go to college and get good grades, she said.

When faced with deciding among five engineering schools, Allison said she chose Penn State because of its strong support programs for women and minority students. "You don't typically see a lot of women or minorities in engineering classes," she said. Programs like the Women in Engineering Program (WEP) and the Multicultural Engineering Program (MEP) helped her to network and to study with other students in her field.

Allison said her bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Penn State opened up many opportunities. She went on to earn a master's degree in engineering management from the University of Michigan, studying part time while she worked full time at Ford Motor Company.

As soon as she graduated from Penn State, Allison began giving back to her alma mater. She has served on the Engineering Diversity advisory board to the dean of the College of Engineering since 2002,

including a two-year term as chair. She has been a design judge, distinguished-career participant, panelist, and leadership team member for Penn State's WEP orientation, and a panelist for the MEP orientation. In March 2013, she received the Penn State Engineering Diversity Award in recognition of her years of leadership and mentoring to WEP and MEP students, inspiring them to become world-class engineers.

Allison's contributions extend beyond Penn State. As an alumna of the Jackie Robinson Foundation, she regularly volunteers as a judge for the Detroit Tigers Annual Jackie Robinson Essay, Poetry & Art Contest. She is the National Society of Black Engineers–Detroit Alumni Extension liaison to the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) and chair of the SWE–Detroit girls' engineering exploration parent and teacher workshop. Though her service often has focused on increasing underrepresented groups in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields, she advises all students that college should be a first priority.

Allison is the critical link between the Engineering Society of Detroit (ESD) and other organizations. She has judged the ESD Future City Competition multiple times and has volunteered for the ESD

career fair, presenting a workshop to other engineering professionals. She promotes the involvement of her peers through key fundraising events such as the ESD Today, ESD Tomorrow Annual Fundraising Breakfast. ESD recognized her volunteer efforts with its 2011 Outstanding Young Engineer of the Year Award and 2010 Distinguished Service Award.

Allison is a life member of the Penn State Alumni Association and lives in Novi, Michigan.

