

Women in Engineering Keep our World Moving: Meet Amber Whittaker-Smith

Like so many other Engineers working in the industry, Amber Whittaker didn't set out to be an Aerospace Engineer. What she did have was encouragement, from her parents, her teachers and now from colleagues.



“I’ve been blessed with a great support system, starting with my parents,” Amber said. “Since I’ve been at Textron Aviation, starting with my internship, I’ve worked in very good groups with so many mentors.”

“It all comes down to the work you put in.”

— Amber Whittaker, Senior Engineer, Product Engineering

“I’ve always felt I was part of the team,” she continued. “It all comes down to the work you put in.”

A Wichita native, Amber was always good at math and developed an interest in mechanical technology through her father. Originally headed for a career in education, she was encouraged at home and in high school to pursue Aerospace Engineering at Wichita State University.

It seemed logical, given the wealth of aerospace companies in town, but it wasn’t always easy.

“I didn’t do well in my first aerodynamics class and wondered if this was really the right career for me,” Amber said. “I was hearing words like fuselage and empennage for the first time, and I struggled.”

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She asked a favorite professor, also a woman, if she should leave the field.

“She told me I had already been through the basic courses, and succeeded, so keep pushing,” Amber said. “Engineering teaches you how to fail while you keep looking for solutions.”

She first came to Textron Aviation through a co-op program, combining work and classes, and then became full-time nine years ago. Two years later, she joined the McCauley Propeller team.

“McCauley is a smaller scale company, and you get to be part of the entire program, from design and testing to certification and product support,” Amber said. “I’ve been very lucky as we get to wear a lot of hats here.”

McCauley Propeller, a division within Textron Aviation, has also given her more and more responsibility, something she actively seeks.

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“I just want to keep growing, be a contributor, bring value to the company, and be a mentor to others,” Amber said. “I think Engineering is the greatest job in the world and very rewarding.”

There is one primary lesson she would pass on to other young women in Engineering.

“Be open to failure because that’s how you learn.”

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