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Annual Review 2011

Paul Acarnley, Academy Manager

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to report on recent developments in the E3 Academy.

As announced in last year's report, the Academy has been joined by a new industrial partner, Edwards, which is a manufacturer of high vacuum equipment located in Sussex. At the 2010 Council meeting it was agreed that Bristol University should be invited to join us as a third academic partner. More recently, further companies within Siemens Industry UK have expressed interest in recruiting E3 Scholars. Therefore it has been agreed that the long-standing E3 membership of Siemens Industry Automation and Drives Technologies should be expanded to include the whole Siemens Industry Group.

The 2011 recruitment round was distinguished by an unprecedented 96 applicants to the Academy. While some of this increase can be attributed to the additional university member, there were also substantial increases in the numbers of applicants related to Nottingham and Newcastle Universities. Another factor to be taken into account was the general increase in university applicants for 2011 in reaction to the projected fee increase in 2012. However, credit must go to the many E3 scholars who have participated in university open days, sharing their experiences with university applicants and encouraging them to consider a future with the Academy.

Inspired by the large number of applicants and their high quality, many of the E3 companies elected to increase recruitment, so a total of 22 new scholars were able to join the Academy. For the academic year 2011/12, there are 49 E3 scholars studying at the three member universities at all levels from Foundation Year to Stage 4 MEng.

In summer 2011 all six E3 graduates who were offered employment with their sponsoring companies elected to take up those positions. These graduates have spent two or three summer vacations with their companies and have become thoroughly acquainted with the organisations, so they are well-positioned to make an immediate business impact.

One of our most important activities is the annual Summer School, which brings together all scholars and representatives from member companies and universities. The 2011 event was held in Bristol and was attended by 42 delegates, who enjoyed the technical challenge of constructing a switched-mode power supply, seminars on lean manufacturing and power electronics, a visit to Airbus, an inspiring talk on the Bloodhound Supersonic Car, and a ten-pin bowling social gathering. As always, I am indebted to the many people who contributed to the organisation of the Summer School and made it our most enjoyable yet.

While the Academy has expanded considerably in the last year, we continue to face a major challenge in attracting more member companies. The recent National Power Electronics Strategy has highlighted the shortage of appropriately-skilled graduates as an inhibiting factor in the growth of the UK power electronics industry. It is to be hoped that more organisations will learn from the positive experiences of our current members, who are beginning to benefit from a secure supply of talented and well-trained young engineers.

Paul Acarnley
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