

STEM SPOTLIGHT

Brad Davis

Deputy Director of Engineering
City of Memphis

Bachelor and Master of Science, Civil Engineering
University of Memphis



Q How did you select your college major?

A My brother-in-law was an Architectural Technology major at the U of M. Occasionally, when he came over to see my sister, I would see some the drawings he was working on and I thought they looked pretty interesting. I already had an interest in “building things” and I think seeing his work sealed the deal. When I started at U of M the counselor suggested that I try Civil Engineering. I did, and I’ve loved it ever since.

Q What was the biggest influence in your selection of major/career?

A I think my brother-in-law (see above) and maybe the fact that I was an Eagle Scout. In scouting you are exposed to a lot of different fields as you work on merit badges. I think somewhere along the way I just really developed an interest for how things work and for construction in general. I was also interested in “environmental” work, so when I found out about water and wastewater engineering, that seemed to be a good fit.

Q If you could go back to high school and select any elective course to take that would have better prepared you for college, what would it be?

A My senior year of high school I didn’t have to take a math class to graduate... so I didn’t. It would have been helpful if I had taken calculus that year. I would have been more prepared for college calculus had I done so.



Q What is your favorite aspect of your job?

A I love solving problems, I think most engineers do. I love knowing that what I do provides a very basic need to the general public. Whether it is clean drinking water, roadway design, traffic signal timing, building bridges or numerous other things, civil engineering provides infrastructure that is used daily to make our lives better.



Q How do you/your company make a positive impact on society/our community?

A As a City employee, I am, by definition, a public servant. In that regard, I view everything I do as a service to the citizens of City of Memphis. I think the biggest role I play is helping to find the funding for major projects, prioritizing the projects and making sure all the administrative work is done so they can move forward. I also have to make some technical decisions when things fall in the “grey areas” where there is not a textbook “black and white” answer.

Q What is the most interesting thing you have been able to do in your career?

A When I was in the private consulting world, I worked on several projects in Afghanistan. I made two trips to the country during the war to check on the construction and meet with local officials. On the second trip we were flying into Afghanistan on the day the Bin Laden was shot. We thought long and hard about continuing the trip, but we did and it turned out fine.

Q What makes you get up each morning excited about your profession?

A I know that each day I go to work I am literally shaping our city. I make important decisions about what we build and how we spend our money. I make decisions that impact public safety in a very direct and real way. It’s not an easy job, but it is very fulfilling. It is meaningful work that allows me to serve others and make things better.

Q What advice would you like to share with K-12 students who are considering your profession?

A Do it... engineering is a great field. There are so many different paths you can take with an engineering degree. You can be a design consultant, work for a regulatory agency, work for the city, state or federal government, teach, do research or even go into sales. When you get an engineering degree it’s like a whole world of opportunity is opened for you. You can earn a good living while making a real difference. For me, that is incredibly fulfilling and rewarding.