



# RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

Outstanding Grad  
**Rick Tullis** shares  
principles for life  
and career

by Meaghan Ortolf

**FOR RICK TULLIS, PE,** life is a journey of relationships – with God, family, friends and colleagues – and he sees every milestone in his life as a triumph of those relationships.

Tullis' journey includes a relationship with Baylor where he earned a bachelor of science in mechanical engineering in spring 1993. Tullis, named a Herbert H. Reynolds Outstanding Young Alumni during Baylor's 2009 Homecoming activities, said the strenuous academics, small class sizes, and multi-disciplinary approach in the engineering department well prepared him for his career.

One of the first places that tougher-than-average education proved its firm foundation was a 6-month graduate engineering training program that he went through as part of his employment with The Trane Company. The extremely competitive class consisted of 40 graduate engineers from big-name engineering schools across the country. Tullis notes he "fared very well" in the course and that he came to appreciate how well Baylor had prepared him.

Perhaps equally important to the academics, Tullis' student career extended beyond the invisible walls of his major and allowed him to enjoy many of the traditions that make Baylor unique. He credits Baylor's smaller size for his ability to explore other aspects of college life during his undergraduate years. As a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity and the Baptist Student Union, he formed relationships outside of his major field of study, participated in such activities as All University Sing, and served as co-chairman of the Greek Council for Christ. "Not only did the 'Baylor experience' help me grow into a more well-rounded person," Tullis says, "but it was through Greek Council for Christ that I met my wife!"

He believes that one distinct advantage of Baylor's engineering program is its interdisciplinary approach. Engineering students work with engineers in different major fields of study as well as with students outside of the engineering department. This approach gives students a look at how business is done in the real-world.

"It is exciting now to see Baylor putting technology students and business/entrepreneur students together to tackle projects around the globe," Tullis says. "Today's Baylor students have awesome opportunities available to them."

After graduation Tullis went to work for The Trane Company, where he became the controls product manager for North America, and then eventually left the corporate world to work in small business at Waco Systems Inc., where he served as the manager of engineered services. The next career step meant taking an entrepreneurial risk to pursue a dream. In 2005 Tullis partnered with three men – Texas A&M engineering graduate Stefan LeRow and Baylor Hankamer School of Business graduates Brian Aynesworth and Will Fair – to start Capstone Mechanical, where he serves as president.

Capstone Mechanical is an engineering, contracting and service company that serves Central Texas mainly in the areas of air conditioning and plumbing. With about 100 employees currently, it is one of the fastest growing companies of its kind. Reflecting Tullis' and his partner's relationships with God, Capstone is built around

a "servant leadership culture." The company sets itself apart in the industry through its core values, noted on its website as including "being good stewards of resources," "treating others the way you would want to be treated" and "doing the right thing." Capstone hopes its ethics in action enable its customers to see the difference and to keep coming back. "Capstone has far exceeded what I had imagined it would be when we started in 2005 and I'm especially thankful for the great people I get to work with on a daily basis," he notes.

Tullis and his partners maintain a relationship with Baylor through Capstone in multiple ways. The company performs engineering, contracting and service for many campus buildings that are under construction or renovation. Yet, the most valuable relationship could be the internships Capstone provides for Baylor engineering and business students. Interns receive training for their future fields and personal mentoring on how a career doesn't mean you have to ignore your faith.

Tullis gains some satisfaction in "teaching interns that what they're doing really matters, their work is important and they should take pride in it." The interns are shown how to carry their personal values into the work place and that their professional work is an opportunity to serve God and others.

Capstone is a corporate partner with Baylor ECS, meaning the young company contributes financially to Baylor's different programs and receives recognition. "We see what Baylor is doing as important," Tullis said. Beyond donations and the internship program, he also takes time to speak with students and work with engineering student projects.

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Baylor ECS Dean Ben Kelley appreciates the time and effort given by Tullis and Capstone. "He remains an active supporter of our engineering program through the professional partnership of his company, Capstone Mechanical, and also a proud sponsor of Baylor athletic events," Kelley said. "Examples of their active partnership include internship positions, meeting with students about careers in the heating and air conditioning industry, and providing technical and material resources for projects within our School."

Tullis' interaction with Baylor is an effort to help Baylor ECS continue to grow and move forward. He particularly wants to help ECS achieve future expansion goals so that more students can continue to find relationships and experiences similar to those he had at Baylor. ■