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School Communications

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Rising Star Kristin Komendowski: From PNW BOCES to NASA

You could say that Career and Technical Education alum Kristin Komendowski's career has really taken off. The 22-year-old New Visions Engineering graduate is now working for NASA.

In January, the 2016 Mahopac High School graduate, who attended BOCES in her senior year of high school, started her position as Operational Support Officer in Mission Control at the NASA Johnson Space Center in Houston, with engineering powerhouse KBR.

"Sometimes I can't believe it," she said of her appointment. "It's wild! I keep saying to myself, 'I'm going to NASA!'"

A science and math wizard in high school, Komendowski had no idea what career might lay ahead for her until a high school advisor suggested engineering. "I was like, oh, that's what you do with math and science," she said.

Komendowski found the perfect launchpad for her future in the New Visions Engineering Program at PNW BOCES' Tech Center. And so, her path to the Johnson Space Center began.

Joining about 10 other students from area high schools, Komendowski was able to explore the many fields of engineering. "I loved it. It really introduced to me to the different types of engineering and their applications and gave me clarity on where I wanted to go," she said.

It also gave her a head start at college. Komendowski went on to study mechanical engineering at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT).

"Without my experience at BOCES I wouldn't have known how to use the tools, start a design process and work on a team with people who have different interests and skills," she said. "I found I was able to take the processes and apply my senior capstone project to continue to move forward and deepen my understanding of the field."

Mechanical engineering at RIT is a five-year program that includes two co-op sessions each running for a semester and a summer. Komendowski completed both of her co-ops at Boeing where she was a production line test engineer, and worked on flight test equipment for the 777X wide-bodied jet.

There might have been a bit of destiny at work in her joining NASA. As a middle school student, she entered and won an essay competition to speak to an astronaut who went to space. She recalls the brief interview with the astronaut and how it made her feel. "I still have his signed letter framed on my bedroom wall at home," she said.

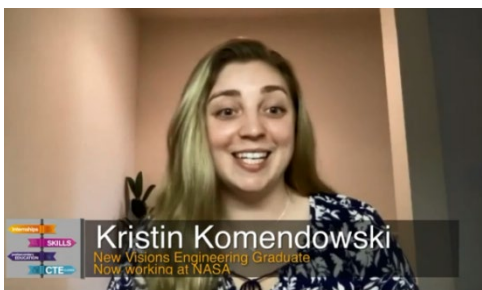
Her dad may have influenced her as well. "He wanted to be an astronaut. I just found an old email he sent me when I first went to college: It was all these pictures of space!"

She reflects on the nerves she felt on her first day at BOCES ... and how quickly they dissipated, and has some advice for high school students looking for their destiny.

"Don't hesitate to try something outside of your high school. Once I went to BOCES I was so happy I was there and I felt if I gave it my all, I could get everything I needed out of the program," she said. "I often think back to my experience at BOCES and I see how all those skills prepared me for what was next."

For Komendowski, what's next now is a whole universe and she's ready. "I'm so excited to see what's going to come in the future!"

<https://www.pnwboces.org/site/News/Rising-Star-Kristin-Komendowski-From-PNW-BOCES-to.aspx>



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