

POETS3-E-FutureLeaders_DL

Besides Teaching Research, POETS Teaches How to *Lead* Industry Research

Outcome/accomplishment: Graduate students develop the “soft skills” needed to become the next generation of STEM leaders through the Future Technical Leaders (FTL) program launched at the Center for Power Optimization of Electro-Thermal System, an NSF-funded Engineering Research Center (ERC) based at the University of Illinois.

Impact/benefits: Post-program surveys show that 90% of the students strongly agreed that the FTL program improved leadership and scientific-communication skills and supported their career planning, among other benefits.

Explanation/ background: POETS has created the one-year fellowship program for Ph.D. students seeking to pursue leadership positions at technology-focused companies. The program prepares students to face the daily challenges of managing and leading teams, communicating with business-oriented colleagues, and surmounting the hurdles associated with the commercialization of research.

Bi-weekly webinar series in the fall and spring semesters feature industry leaders who share their experiences in management as well as introduce business concepts and specific frameworks for effective management. Several program assignments contribute to the fellows’ personal portfolio, including self-assessments, team member assessments, an individual development plan, a 90-second elevator pitch video, and a technical white paper. The program concludes with students shadowing industry leaders in a multi-day industry site visit.



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*The initial class of 11 FTL students came from all four core POETS partner universities.
(Credit: POETS)*