

Man in the machines

“Ideally, I will use engineering to do development work in Africa before going to Europe for school,” says Jesse Thornburg (ACA 2007 / Massachusetts Institute of Technology 2011).

“For now, I’m just grateful for all the opportunities at MIT,” where Jesse says the work has been rigorous and internships plentiful. “This winter term, for instance, I did a short internship for the Naval Postgraduate School in California. I researched nanotechnology for use in battlefield medical applications, specifically integrating biosensors and drug delivery devices into the soldier’s shirt.”



**ASHEVILLE CHRISTIAN
ACADEMY**

In February 2011, if all goes according to plan, Jesse will earn *two separate bachelor’s degrees*, in Mechanical Engineering and Comparative Media Studies. “My main academic focus is on robotics and artificial intelligence, including human-computer interaction. This summer, I’m doing an internship in submarine robotics. I’ve done research in nanotechnology, which got me my current position. Then, I worked last summer for the DC Metro, collaborating with both machinists and engineers to test metal parts, writing maintenance reports, and analyzing/designing a setup to test the trains’ sway response.”

Jesse remembers that he had “essentially no engineering experience” before heading off to MIT. “I had accumulated broad experience in other areas, though, which proved more important.”

“At my Dad’s urging, for example, I worked construction in Weaverville one

summer and used these skills on mission trips to Mexico, Bolivia, and Malawi. I also took advantage of the small pocket of scientific research available to me.

“For two summers I participated in ecology research with professors at Montreat College, and the project became my ACA senior thesis on a chemi-

cal buffer to combat acid pollution. The readiness to grab an unlikely opportunity and work hard to bring it to fruition ended up serving me better than the vast experience which many of my MIT classmates brought to the table.” Jesse stresses one point to his ACA schoolmates: “There’s no excuse for idleness!”

