

Making a Difference

Investing in Education

An Interview with James E. Whaley,
President, Siemens Foundation

EDITORS' NOTE James Whaley was appointed President of the Siemens Foundation in June 2006 and has overseen the foundation's management since joining as Vice President in October 2004. He also serves as Senior Director of Corporate Affairs for Siemens Corporation. Whaley previously served as the Director of Communications at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and spent 20 years in the U.S. Army. He received his undergraduate degree from



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Lock Haven University and completed his MBA at Embry Riddle Aeronautical University in Frankfurt, Germany. Whaley also attended the Defense Information School in Fort Meade, Maryland, and completed the U.S. Army Helicopter Instructor Pilot Course at Fort Rucker, Alabama.

COMPANY BRIEF Each year, the Siemens Foundation (www.siemens-foundation.org) contributes nearly \$4 million dollars in support of math, science, and technology education from grade school to graduate school. The foundation's signature programs, the Siemens Competition in Math, Science, and Technology, and the Siemens Awards for Advanced Placement (AP), reward exceptional achievement in science, math, and technology and help nurture tomorrow's scientists and engineers. Founded more than 160 years ago, the Siemens companies in the United States are headquartered in New York and employ approximately 72,000 people in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. Worldwide, Siemens and its subsidiaries employ 471,000 people in 190 countries.

A key focus for Siemens has been education around math and science. How do you think this will make an impact?

I think it boils down to our commitment to the future and to those who are going to create the future. The best way to fulfill this commitment is through outreach in education. We know that the answers for tomorrow are in the minds of our students today, and for us to maintain the quality of life that you and I enjoy – and that we want our children to enjoy – we need to invest in the future and in education. That's why we think it's so important to focus on math and science education, and that's why we have programs from grade school to graduate school that help students reach their full potential.



Some people might think it's difficult to evaluate success in the area of educational outreach. Do you have ways to measure the impact your programs have?

We have our Siemens Scholar Network, which is an online network that reaches all the students who have participated in our programs, including the Siemens Competition, Siemens

Awards for Advanced Placement, and Siemens Teacher Scholars selected from our nation's historically black colleges and universities, so we can stay in touch with them and they can share ideas with each other. We're eventually going to bring in guest speakers to reach those students and talk to them about their education and what they can do for the future. So I think there's a way to measure in that regard, because we're able to find out the numbers of students who are involved with the network, who are playing an active role, and who are reaching out to participate in one of our other programs, such as our Siemens Science Days, where students and Siemens employees go to fourth, fifth, and sixth graders and get them excited about math and science with hands-on science experiments. I think that's a way to measure success.

Is it challenging to get people excited about math and science, and do you feel that we're progressing the way we need to be to bring these disciplines to young people?

I think we need to instill the hope that education can bring to people, and we need to show why it's important for students to go into these fields. They're the ones who are going to find the cures to cancer and who are going to find viable solutions to our energy problems. I don't think that we, as a nation, do a good enough job recognizing students. Corporate America should not automatically assume that the best and brightest are going to knock on its doors, and we can't just hope that the college system is going to produce them. We need to be involved, and that's why we are involved. I think we need to collectively reward students better and highlight the importance of education.

In these programs do you collaborate with others, or do you independently go out and make things happen?

We do collaborate with a number of education partners: The College Board administers the Siemens Competition and Siemens Awards for Advanced Placement, and Scholastic develops the curriculum for our Siemens Science Day Program. We work with some of the nation's best colleges for our Siemens Competition. I work very closely with the U.S. Secretary of Education and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce on our programs. We think it's important for us to collaborate with other foundations and share best practices. There's a lot of emphasis on companies doing good work in their communities, because we face such big issues together. I think education is the one area in corporate America where there's a white flag. To me, it's wonderful to be involved with corporate foundations. I'm very excited about my job. I feel great about it at the end of the day because I know that I am making a significant difference with young people.

Before you joined Siemens in 2004, you had a successful career in the U.S. Army. Has working at Siemens been what you expected?

It's been more than I expected. When I came here, I had just finished my career with the U.S. Army. Coming to corporate America was a bit intimidating, because I was leaving the military culture, and I didn't know how much I was going to enjoy it. But I've been very pleased with the commitment that folks have to our programs and with the support I've had from our CEO, George Nolen, in growing our programs. This company has a great soul to it. It's an old company with a rich history, but it's also very committed to the future. We are always looking at new ways of doing things, and I think that translates to what we do in the Siemens Foundation. We have an active philanthropy.

Siemens and other companies are doing so much good work, but the understanding in the public isn't always there. Is enough being done to raise awareness of the good that corporations do in the community?

I think that our focus should be on doing good work and on getting people involved. The good news will follow. ●

The Siemens Foundation provides tomorrow's scientists with invaluable experiences.