Mike McCarthy, an electrical engineering technology major at Ward College of Technology, is not waiting for his degree to start gaining first-hand experience as an engineer. He has taken on several engineering projects during his first two years at the University and is beginning to see his ideas come to fruition. In addition to working several engineering jobs on campus to pay his own tuition, Mike has also intensified his extracurricular activities since we first talked with him in ’99.

During his freshman year, Mike got a job as a technician at the University’s television studio, where he met and worked under his mentor engineer, Mike Martin ’95. When Martin left the University in the fall of 2000, Mike took over much of his job. Now an engineer for the television studio himself, Mike says that this opportunity allowed him to learn how to do a lot of things on his own. He works 20 hours a week at the TV studio, even though his position only requires him to put in 10. “It’s my passion, so I live over there. I really should set up a cot in my office,” he said.

Mike is very active with Channel 2, the student-run television station that produces a live, half-hour news program each week during the academic year. Channel 2 is where he does most of his learning and spends most of his time. Mike and his peers on the engineering crew have made tremendous strides this year, broadcasting sporting events live for the first time and building their own production truck from the ground up. Among their many achievements were a Channel 2 trip to Washington, D.C., to report on the presidential inauguration; coverage of live soccer and basketball games; a live campus town meeting during the 2000 presidential election; and the Student Government Association’s presidential debate.

In January 2000, Mike took on his biggest project yet. Believing that Channel 2’s office space was too small, he drew blueprints of how he’d like to see it improved. Mike promoted his ideas and got the University to allow Channel 2 to use room 132 in Gengras Student Union as the expanded Channel 2 office. The project took several months to complete, but now the new office houses a TV studio for Channel 2’s smaller productions, allowing the students to work at their own pace rather than working around the schedule of the University’s TV studio. Seeing the new facility close to being finished has been the highlight of Mike’s time at the University so far, he said.

“In one year, I can’t believe how much the organization has improved. I came in with big ideas as a freshman, and now Channel 2 has three different properties in Gengras. I drove Operations and Maintenance nuts, but they were very cooperative. It took time to get to know me, but I’ve made a lot of friends working on this project,” Mike said.

Mike, who seems to thrive under pressure, also took on the responsibilities of directing many of Channel 2’s broadcasts this year. He says that directing is fun but is very stressful. “Every show, something goes wrong and you have to make split-second decisions.”

In addition to the TV studio and Channel 2, Mike works at Wilde Auditorium as a technician for the Gray Conference Center. He also worked in the kitchen at The 1877 Club during the fall 2000 semester to earn extra money. He’s been very busy, but it doesn’t seem to bother him. “I’m doing all right. It’s not easy, but I’m doing it. The experience I’ve had at Channel 2 alone has been worth it. It’s been incredible.”

In the midst of all of these activities, Mike has maintained a 3.36 grade point average. He enjoys his classes, but his favorite aspect of his experience has been the hands-on learning that his jobs provide him.

Mike’s career goals are mixed. He would like to become an engineer at a television station, but his dream is to open a hardware store with his father. His goals for the rest of his time at the University are for Channel 2 to get more funding and for more classes to make use of the TV studio. “It’s one of the top 10 college facilities in the country, and I’d like to see it being used to its full potential.”

Mike is spending this summer at his home near Rochester N.Y. He is working for the Brockport Central School District, where he and his best friend have been in charge of data and telecom wiring for the past six years. Mike smiled proudly, as he told The Observer that he’ll be working 40 hours a week. He will also keep busy working on renovations to his family home.

A self-proclaimed Channel 2 junkie, Mike is interested in extending himself even more in the next two years. This year, he was involved in construction of the University’s Habitat for Humanity house in the North End of Hartford and would like to participate in Habitat’s alternative spring break program in the future. He’d also like to become involved in the College of Engineering’s Society of Automotive Engineers formula car club. If that were not enough, he also hopes, by the spring of 2002, to become the chief engineer for Channel 2. —MG