July 1, 2020 — When Glen Wright walks into a room, excited faces light up to see who’s following closely behind. His one-to-one scale model of a famous Star Wars droid turns heads wherever the two venture.

Wright and his fully-functional Astromech serve an important role in the College of Engineering. During his junior and senior year, Wright joined a team of student ambassadors who travel the state promoting USU engineering programs to future Aggies. He decided to build the droid as a way to get elementary and middle school students excited about engineering.

“We wanted to get people’s attention, and I thought there’s no better way than to build something that seems so out of place and yet so recognizable,” he said.

The droid contains all the famous R2D2 features, including a rotating dome with authentic lights and 200 digital sound effects generated by an Arduino microcontroller. The droid even has working logic displays, the iconic blue and silver light show inside R2’s dome, a feature that often intimidates would-be builders.

“It left me feeling like a real engineer or at least that I was on my way to becoming a real engineer,” he said. “I applied what I learned in class to everyday life. And not just on the R2D2 project but in my internships, my networking opportunities and my undergraduate research. I graduated knowing I made the most of my education.”

Wright graduated in May with a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering with emphasis on aerospace engineering. He received a job offer with Northrop Grumman in Roy, Utah, where he’ll work on the U.S. Air Force Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent program. He plans to earn a master’s degree at the USAF Test Pilot School and train as a flight test engineer. Later, he hopes to earn a PhD and teach engineering at a university.

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