

What comes to mind when someone tells you that they work at JPL? Scientist. Engineer. Numbers. What comes to mind when you think of scientists, engineers, and numbers? People in white lab coats working in shiny, clean rooms with complicated silvery metal contraptions.

At least, that is what I thought of whenever I looked at the picture of Albert Einstein on the wall of my 5th grade classroom.

However, as my stay here at JPL grows longer and I meet more and more people I realize that people that work at JPL are not all scientists, engineers, and number crunchers but there are also many different incredible people who work behind the scenes. They are the ones who help streamline the processes that the scientists and engineers have to go through in order to accomplish their goals.

Every day, all employees need to go past the security gates staffed by the kind but observant officers – yes, JPL has its own police department and fire department. After passing through the gates and taking that very long walk through the parking lot and finally onto the lab, we see all the people who work on sweeping the leaves off the ground, cleaning what mess the deer leave behind, and making sure the landscaping of the lab is primed nicely. I walk past all of them and finally reach my building. If it is a Tuesday, I can usually find the custodian collecting recyclables around the floor.

Although I bring my own lunches, I can't exclude the people who work at the cafeterias. From grilled cheese to udon to sandwiches, the JPL cafeterias provide a good variety of food – most of which are pretty good. As I mentioned before (or not if you have not read my other works) JPL has a very 'college campus-y' feeling to it and the cafeteria is no exception. There are lunch cards that hold credit and a sort of make your own fruit cup/salad/lunch thing going on. The workers there not only take your money and provide services, they also cook and clean – anything that is needed to run a cafeteria, they do it.

As for the people who directly help our engineers and scientists, there are the transportation and shipping people. There are those who help move papers and furniture around when someone moves to a new office. There are those who carry flight hardware into the clean rooms where engineers can use them to build new instruments. There are also the shipping people who help mail out and receive packages that need to go to and from the lab.

And of course, there are the people who deal with all the money involved with JPL. There is whole section of them (in fact, most of the other interns I know and the few lunches I've spent outside are people who are in the money side of things). So even if the lab looks like all science, there are dollars that need to be calculated. A few of the ones I spoke to are involved with looking at past projects and making sure that all the calculations involving money are correct.

Even with so many different types of jobs that are needed in order for JPL to run efficiently, JPL holds many talks and have many different ways for employees to learn

more. I've been to a few of them and all of them are informative and are helping me make some choices about what I might want to do in school and in the future.

So to those people who feel that science and technology isn't for them, there are many different opportunities to work here at JPL – I mean who doesn't think it is cool be able to say I work for JPL/CalTech/NASA (my friends do at least).