Jerry Counts (EE '66) is a man on a double mission.

As a Boeing senior systems engineer, he is working on the International Space Station's power system, which will be launched and installed by space-walking astronauts after the Russian service module is attached this spring.

As a generous participant in Cal Poly's planned giving program, he is helping launch future engineers, partially in appreciation for Cal Poly's hands-on approach to learning and for his on-campus teaching experience after graduation.

"Right out of school I was designing circuits, building and testing them in the lab, and then writing up comprehensive reports just like my senior project," he says. "And teaching those classes had as much to do with my future success as anything, making me one of Boeing’s main 'presenters' as I traveled around the country to meet with NASA contractors."

Jerry wanted to give Cal Poly and students in need a substantial amount, and his estate planner suggested that because his 401(k) plan was tax deferred, it would be the best asset to leave the university.

"He explained that if I left this asset to my heirs, they would receive only a percentage of its value because of the taxes that would be due. But by designating Cal Poly as my 401(k) beneficiary, I can direct the dollars that would have gone to taxes to the university. I would encourage others my age to put in place an estate plan and consider establishing potential gifts to Cal Poly through their 401(k)’s or other retirement assets."

For more information on planned giving, contact Mike McCall, J.D., Director of Planned Giving and Endowments, at 805/756-7125 or toll-free at 800/549-2666 (fax 805/756-2711, e-mail mmccall@calpoly.edu).