Patrick Lin, a visiting professor of philosophy at Cal Poly, thinks a doomsday scenario is highly unlikely. He just wants to be sure the possibility isn’t ignored.

“It feels like some scientists are underplaying the possible risks,” Lin said. “Even if the risk of catastrophe is one in 50 million, the world is literally at stake.”

It’s an opinion Lin holds of all science and technology – a belief that led him to co-found The nanoethics Group, a non-partisan collection of experts from around the world promot-

ing discussions of ethics and emerging technologies.

Lin stressed that the group, based with him at Cal Poly, is not anti-technology. “We like to think of ourselves as being in the middle of the spectrum,” Lin said. “Technology is developing so fast that we’re inventing things faster than we can consider their impacts. We want to raise issues of possible concern with the advance of technology, to try to look at issues in a more measured, sensible and grounded way.”

Lin earned a doctorate degree in philosophy from UC Santa Barbara in 1997. He formed The Nanoethics Group in 2003 with professors from Dartmouth College and Western Michigan University. He is the group’s research director. Its advisory board includes 36 professors, researchers and other experts from around the world.

So far, the group has published two anthologies of papers and has presented research at several conferences. As well, its research team received $250,000 in grants from the U.S. National Science Foundation in 2006 to study human enhancement and nanotechnology. The studies are being done at Dartmouth and Western Michigan University. As the group moves forward, Lin hopes to strike a better balance between the group’s academic work and a broader presence – getting the word out in mainstream media.

“I’m not sure how much good it does to write a paper if only 10 other people are going to see it,” he said. “The ultimate goal is to get people to think and engage.”

Meanwhile, he is working with about 30 other professors in several disciplines at Cal Poly in the Ethics and Emerging Technologies Working Group. The group is working on Navy-funded research with collaborators at Yale, Rutgers and Indiana University on the military’s use of autonomous robots.

Lin hopes the group can put on conferences and start a lecture series at Cal Poly. And he is teaching a new course in the upcoming winter quarter on nanoethics. In the longer term, he hopes the group can become a full-fledged center at Cal Poly. The campus provides a perfect mix of academic disciplines and is strategically placed between San Francisco and Los Angeles, he said.

For more on The nanoethics Group, visit www.nanoethics.org. For more on the Ethics and Emerging Technologies Working Group, visit http://ethics.calpoly.edu. For more on Lin’s thoughts on the Large Hadron Collider, visit www.newstimes.com/commentary/994/largehadron collider.

THE CAL POLY STUDENT BODIES is a critical piece of our society’s potential, shaping the leaders, innovators and world citizens of tomorrow.

Parents more than anyone understand this. Many have joined the effort for critical private support as members of the newly formed Parents Philanthropy Council, with a focus on maintaining and increasing the exceptional value of a Cal Poly education.

“The Parents Philanthropy Council was formed to educate parents about the importance of private support for Cal Poly and how it enhances their students’ education,” said Cal Poly Vice President of Advancement Sandra Ogrin. “It also provides an opportunity to raise funds that support the student experience at Cal Poly, engaging parents as key volunteers for the campus.”

Approximately 10 percent of the university’s budget comes from private gifts and donations, a percentage that is expected to rapidly increase in the coming years due to dwindling state support. This comes as the global marketplace becomes increasingly competitive.

Last year, parents gave approximately 7,800 gifts to Cal Poly totaling just over $1.8 million. Cal Poly has the highest giving level from parents of any of the 23 CSU campuses.

The council hopes to reinforce and expand on that record. During their student’s time at Cal Poly, parents will receive letters and phone calls from students and parents, seeking support for the Cal Poly Parent Fund.

One parent and council member is Leslie Daniels, who currently has two sons, Thomas and Daniel Logue, attending Cal Poly. “More than state funding is needed to cover the entire cost of educating our students,” said Daniels, who serves as the council’s regional chair for the Bay Area. “Generous donations help fund scholarships, programs, projects, laboratories and other resources for our students.”

Another council member is Karen Fisher, the council’s regional chair for the Central Valley. Fisher’s husband, Ron, earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Cal Poly. Their son, Blake, and daughter, Becca, are current students. “Cal Poly is very special to my family. I hope that it will become, or continue to be, an important part of everyone’s family as well,” she said.

The formation of the parent’s council comes on the heels of the newly formed Student Philanthropy Council, the first organization of its kind in Cal Poly’s history. It involves student leaders in philanthropic projects, educates students about the benefits of private support, and promotes an awareness and appreciation of philanthropy among students. The student philanthropy council establishes a line of communication between Cal Poly Foundation Board members, alumni and students.

For more information, contact Anne Harris, director of campaign and donor relations, at 805-756-7468 or anhharris@calpoly.edu.

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