

Meet the Dean:

Mohammad Noori's Visions for Engineering

BY JO ANN LLOYD

From iPods to iRobots, emerging technologies have transformed the world and, in the process, the societal role of engineers, says the new Dean of the College of Engineering, Mohammad Noori.

By their complex nature, new technologies have a critical impact on areas of national concern, he says. Engineers develop more efficient ways to generate and use energy, more responsible ways to protect the environment, and more effective methods to deliver drugs.

The importance of these technologies becomes apparent sometimes only when problems arise: power grid blackouts, viruses infecting the Internet, panics in the financial markets.

"Engineers have a responsibility to improve these systems' operations," Noori says, "But for society to truly benefit from technological research and development, the barriers between technology and society must come down."

Noori says those walls will come down when engineers take a more active role in society and in politics, helping to shape public policy.

"Our challenge," he says, "is to reshape engineering education to meet these needs."

He's eager to meet this challenge, but

well-rounded education "to better understand the needs of the new society."

Noori sees opportunities for collaboration between departments, yet understands that change is accomplished as part of a process. "It needs to be from top down and bottom up, with very close involvement by the faculty, alumni, students, staff and other university programs, as well as industry," he says.

He understands the importance of building relationships. "When you walk into an organization, you must develop an appreciation for the culture and the value system. I want to spend the year getting to know people one-to-one," says the soft-spoken, impeccably dressed dean. "The more time spent getting to know other peoples' ideas, the better I am able to polish up my own ideas – plus it gives people the opportunity to know me."

While leading engineering departments at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and North Carolina State University, he is proud to have recruited many women and minorities. He sees that as a top priority at Cal Poly, too.

Another priority is to have the College of Engineering continue to forge strong partnerships with industry and alumni, leading to the development of more



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graduate and research programs and additional industry-sponsored, learning-based projects for the students.

By building on Cal Poly's hands-on, polytechnic philosophy, Noori thinks the College of Engineering can ride the wave of change to an even higher level of prominence. "In 10 years Cal Poly will be a national leader in redefining engineering education," he predicts.

Noori, a civil engineer by trade, is a recognized researcher in the field of earthquake engineering and structural safety and damage detection. He previously held the endowed R.J. Reynolds Professorship at North Carolina State University. While there he served on the multi-university team that prepared the winning proposal founding the National Institute of Aerospace, a partnership of six universities, the NASA Langley Research Center, and American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics Foundation.

Noori turns 53 on Dec. 24. He is married to Nahid Bozorg, also a civil engineer. The couple has two sons and a daughter. ■

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knows he can't do it alone. His vision includes collaboration with faculty and staff – and not just within the engineering programs.

The new dean wants to create more multidisciplinary options so that the next generation of engineers will have a more