



CARDINAL RULE: WORK HARD, PUT YOUR HEART INTO IT

BY JO ANN LLOYD

SERVING IS SOMETHING **Kristen O'Halloran Cardinal (ENGR '03)** does well, whether it's on the volleyball court or in the classroom, where she's educating the next generation of engineers.

The Nipomo native attended Cal Poly on a full athletic scholarship, graduated summa cum laude, was twice named the Cal Poly Female Scholar Athlete, and earned the College of Engineering Outstanding Senior Award for having the highest GPA.

That level of achievement is likely to carry over into her latest endeavor: teaching at Cal Poly.

After earning a Ph.D. in biomedical engineering from the University of Arizona, the 26-year old – along with her husband of two years, Trevor – was offered an assistant professorship beginning in fall 2007.

Cardinal didn't start out to become a teacher, or an engineer, for that matter. "I saw myself going into biology, taking the pre-med route," she said. "But I wasn't particularly fond of blood."

After her first biomedical engineering class at Cal Poly, Cardinal knew what she wanted. "I found it fascinating that I could do something in the medical field by designing mechanisms, like artificial hearts. The heart is a simple system," she said, "just pipes and pumps."

Simple seems to be a theme that runs through Cardinal's life. Perhaps it has something to do with the discipline she adopted as a student-athlete at Cal Poly, working out three hours a day while keeping up her superior grades. "You definitely learn a good work ethic," she said.

Cardinal began to consider a career in teaching and research while a grad student. "The longer I was in grad school, the more I realized how consistent my priorities were with Cal Poly's approach to learning. Cal Poly is a great place for teaching and research."

Her first class this fall will be an upper-division master's-level class in tissue engineering, a brand new course in the College of Engineering and Cardinal's main research interest. She creates and designs tissue and replacement parts for tissue. Some people grow vegetables; she grows blood vessels. They can be complicated vessels or simple vessels, she explains. "I grow simple vessels."

As a student, Cardinal chose Cal Poly because she knew she would get a great education. She gives much credit to Associate Dean Dan Walsh for helping her attain that goal. "He is one of the most amazing people I have met," Cardinal said. "He has this ability to make you feel like you can do anything."

Cardinal's goals are a perfect fit for Cal Poly. "I hope I can live up to what Cal Poly does," she said. "It's good to have students in the classroom and in the lab. It gives students an understanding that what they are doing will have an impact on people's everyday lives."

Does Cardinal have any doubts or fears? "It's still sinking in that I am back in this fantastic place," she said. "I do have a little anxiety, but I'm not afraid. I'll work hard and put my heart into it." □

