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Electrical Engineering Professor Leaves a 45-Year Legacy

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Mike Cirovic, perhaps Cal Poly’s longest-serving professor, is retiring after 45 years teaching in the Electrical Engineering Department (EE).

The author of six textbooks, Cirovic served as department chair from 2001-07. He received numerous teaching awards, including the American Society for Engineering Education Dow Young Faculty Award; the TRW Excellence in Teaching Award; and the EE Department’s Most Inspirational Professor Award, which he won seven times.

“Mike’s a legendary figure in our department,” said current chair Dennis Derickson. “In a career that spanned from the Flower Children to the Millennials, he made significant contributions, including our Design, Build and Test electronics lab, in which students design subsystems, build them, and then create trial procedures to test operation.

“He focused on rigorous career preparation for students and established a signature lab course, EE 449, which cuts students loose from the standard question-answer format and instead requires independent thinking and open exploration of problems. He also co-founded Innovation Quest, a nonprofit corporation that helps students launch entrepreneurial ventures based on their projects.”

At a recent Bay Area alumni reception held in his honor, Cirovic met more than 100 of his former students. “Two graduates remarked that they wished I was staying to teach even longer, because they both have sons at Cal Poly and would like their children to have me as their professor,” remarked Cirovic. “That was a spectacular moment for me.”

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