

From the Dean

A COUPLE OF YEARS ago, Nancy, my wife, started training with our youngest son's middle-school cross-country team and developed a passion for running. When our son moved on to run with the high school team, so did she. It was a natural move because she's a person committed to progress. In fact, she took another step forward to become an assistant coach for our high-school girls' cross-country team. She even went on to win several road races in the area.



A number of things happened along the way. As she discovered her running talent, and because we're close to campus, she met some world-class, former U-M runners and Olympic hopefuls. Maybe it was inspiration from meeting these athletes, but she found herself moving beyond her comfort zone, improving her performance. She was expanding her horizons.

As dean, I want the College to do likewise. By any measure – student quality, faculty renown, research portfolio, awards, reputation – the College is successful. But what if every student and every member of the faculty and staff took on the challenge of moving beyond their comfort zones? What more could we accomplish and how might we benefit as we interact more with non-engineers?

For example, I want us to think about the undergraduate experience in new ways. In a market research study, last year, alumni revealed a concern that undergraduates

might not receive adequate attention from the College. We've raised the same questions internally. In addition to improving classrooms, I want us to provide more of what I like to call the "other half of education": project teams, leadership opportunities, study-abroad destinations and an entrepreneurial environment.

I'll encourage efforts to build community. Perhaps more than any other institution, a college should be a place where individuals shelve their assumptions and embrace the learning that comes from meeting and getting to know different people with new points of view.

On the faculty front, I'm confident we'll see a greater emphasis on interdisciplinary efforts to tackle some of society's tough problems. Much of this work will happen in research labs, but some efforts will require public-policy leadership. We'll need faculty members who are willing to be spokespersons, authors and voices in Lansing and Washington, D.C. Our world needs more engineers in positions of leadership.

In this issue of *Michigan Engineer*, you'll read about one of those leadership thrusts – the launch of a new University-wide energy initiative, where the College is playing a leading role. You'll see how researchers in and across multiple departments are tackling big problems to help the nation – and the world – reduce dependency on fossil fuels. You'll get a look at research into new territory where alternative energy will play a bigger part. And you'll get a glimpse of the ways in which all of this work will improve the energy picture, reduce environmental harm and lessen international tensions.

I'm excited about our possibilities for making a difference around the world – in energy development and in so many other areas. I hope you'll give your time, talents and resources to support our efforts. If you haven't been involved in the life of the College, I ask you to consider doing so. And if you are a supporter of the College, I thank you for your continued interest.

Dave

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