



Pradeep K. Khosla, dean of the College of Engineering, was recently named a University Professor, the highest academic distinction faculty members can achieve at Carnegie Mellon. With this nomination, Khosla joins a distinguished group of peers who represent the intellectual leadership of the university. Only 10 percent of the university's faculty holds this prestigious position.

## Retaining Young, Bright Students

The College of Engineering is nationally recognized for being an innovator in education. In the 1990s we implemented the "Wipe the Slate Clean" program that literally reformed engineering education in the United States. Among many things, the program initiated the practice of teaching engineering to first-year students. We realized that our youngest students were able to grasp fundamental engineering concepts before completing rigorous math courses. After admitting these students into engineering classes, we discovered that our retention rate improved because first-year students were better able to choose their majors and they enjoyed the early introduction into engineering. By assessing our students' needs and aspirations, we improved their educational experiences and strengthened the college's curriculum. Today we are implementing another program that focuses on social interactions as a means for students to acclimate into the university community.

The program is called the "First-Year Experience," and its mission is to empower and educate young students by enabling them to achieve academic, personal, and professional growth. Investing in our commitment, we hired Pam Golubski as our first-year associate director. An integral part of her job involves fostering relationships between first-year students and the faculty, staff, upper-class students, and alumni. Honing in on first-year students in this manner is crucial because students cite that the main reason why they will leave an institution is because they feel like they don't belong.

To engage new students, we invite them to participate in focus groups. During these sessions, we learn what resources they need in order to make informed decisions about their curricular and career options. To ensure that the students have a voice throughout their transitional year, there is an advisory board that is comprised of 20 first-year students. As a result of this engagement, a number of meaningful programs have been created, including an alumni mentoring program (see page 16), receptions, career information sessions, and service-oriented outreach activities, like food and toy drives. This summer we're launching a virtual common reading experience that will allow students, fresh out of high school, opportunities to communicate online with other members of the CIT community before they ever set foot on campus.

We are proud of the strides we are making in our student programs as well as in other college endeavors. To reengage alumni and familiarize them with our strategic goals, we occasionally invite some of them to campus for an event called "The Dean's Weekend." These weekends conclude with a presentation about the "First-Year Experience," and guests meet with the students. Without fail, our alumni say, "I wish I could be an undergraduate again."

*Dean Pradeep K. Khosla*