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SECS dean aims to boost external funding

By *Jennifer Charney*, OU Staff Writer

Perhaps it's a misperception on campus that the **School of Engineering and Computer Science (SECS)** has more than enough room for its programs in the state-of-the-art Science and Engineering Building. Not so, says new SECS Dean Pieter Frick.

The School of Engineering and Computer Science fits its facilities in four buildings: Hannah Hall, Police and Support Services, the Science and Engineering Building and Dodge Hall of Engineering. Even though "engineering" is part of the names of two of those buildings, the school only occupies about 19 percent of the Science and Engineering Building and 35 percent of Dodge Hall.

Frick says the school only has half the space it needs. That's why one of his goals is to provide more space for SECS laboratories in a new building — the Automotive Transportation Facility — which the Board of Trustees is considering. The facility would contain some classroom and office space, a space to grow new businesses, and a home for the **Center for Entrepreneurship in Information Technology (CEIT)**, which is run in partnership with the **School of Business Administration**.

Frick started working at Oakland on Oct. 15, after leaving his position as dean of the College of Engineering at San Diego State University. His first goal at OU is to get the SECS development operation going.

"Engineering schools are also development operations in the 21st century," he said. "You're not going to be successful unless you develop the external sources of funding, particularly with industry."

SECS is seeking a development officer now.

Frick's other major project is to prepare for a visit in fall 2002 by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology. Rule and criteria changes make this preparation particularly challenging, he said.

"You now have to have an assessment process in place, set goals and objectives for each course, not just by each program, measure whether you have achieved the goals, and continually indicate how you will improve the education process," Frick said.

Most of the assessment process is in place. "The process by which we improve the education is more difficult to illustrate. Every department has a really active industrial advisory board and so does the school overall - that in itself is a major plus," he said.

Frick also is focusing on developing new areas to serve the automobile industry. For example, SECS just added two new master's degree programs, one in embedded systems and one in information systems engineering.

"Both of those areas are really very important, particularly the one in embedded systems," Frick said. "The embedded systems concept is something that will become very pervasive in almost everything we do. Industry is also very interested in the school developing more programs in plastics and nonferrous materials. Mechanical engineering has responded by recruiting new faculty members."

Frick said he's glad to run a school that doesn't need revitalization, citing one of the growth trends: The SECS' research expenditures climbed from \$250,000 in 1994 to more than \$4 million last year. Frick intends to grow the research at the school even more.

The new dean believes in maintaining contact with students. So far, he's very impressed with them. He has met with student leaders and graduating seniors. He also started an open forum with all students that he calls, "Off the Record with the Dean." He will hold the forums once or twice a semester.

Frick also may teach a course, as he has done in his other positions, and he's open to serving as a graduate student adviser.

Frick said he was attracted to Oakland because the Detroit area is one of the largest industrial centers in the world.

Before his stint at San Diego State, Frick served as dean of the College of Engineering and Applied Science at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs.

His other experience includes faculty and/or department head positions at Portland State University and Oregon State University, a visiting professor position at the University of Rome in Italy, and a lecturer position at the University of California at Los Angeles.

Frick holds a Bachelor of Science and master's degree in electrical engineering from the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa and a Ph.D. in control systems from London University.

"Dr. Frick comes to us with a history of interest in our university and a wealth of accomplishments to his credit," said Virinder K. Moudgil, interim vice president of Academic Affairs and provost. "His research is widely published in professional journals. His arrival at OU will enhance the academic programs of the school, and strengthen the ties to industry and collaborations with the surrounding community."

Frick's wife, Mariana, is a plant physiologist. She is still living in San Diego and is trying to sell their home. They have a son, Carl, a mechanical engineer in the Denver area.

SUMMARY

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