



In this excerpt from VALPO Magazine, CoE Dean Kraig Olejniczak '87 shares his thoughts on the mission of the college, its challenges, and its needs for the future.

VALPO : You have stated in the past that “the world needs the kind of engineers the Valpo College of Engineering produces.” Why, and in what ways?

Olejniczak : Valpo's strong commitment to the integration of professional studies and the liberal arts has resulted in generations of engineers who not only exhibit technical proficiency, but values-based and ethical leadership, with strong skills in communication, analysis and problem solving. Leaders who exemplify integrity and honor are needed now more than ever. In addition, first-rate written and verbal communication skills are mandatory to achieving success in this global and information age. Valpo engineers also are products of the CoE's mission—they view engineering not as a career, but a vocation to which they are called to lead and serve for the greater good. The mission imparts to each graduate a sense of being grounded, of understanding the role of values and ethics in their lives. The world needs our kind of graduates, and we need to continue to answer the challenge.

VALPO : What are some of the recent successes enjoyed by your faculty and students?

Olejniczak : Many of our professors have been honored at the national level. Professor Jack Steffen won the 2005 American Society of Mechanical Engineers Dedicated Service Award. Professor Doug Tougaw was selected as runner-up for the 2004 Outstanding Young Electrical Engineer Award by Eta Kappa Nu, the national electrical engineering honor society. Our students also are increasingly nationally recognized. Rachel Husfeld '06 was named to USA Today's 2005 All-USA College Academic First Team; and Kristen Painting '06 won the Co-op Special Achievement Award from the National Aeronautics and Space

College of Engineering - Valparaiso University
Administration. Also, numerous engineering students have won Tau Beta Pi (national engineering honor society) scholarships and fellowships.

VALPO : What are some of the challenges facing the college today?

Olejniczak: The four most fundamental challenges are: the demands the world is making; a nationally declining engineering enrollment; the recruitment of faculty; and the need to invest in a new facility. World demands include advancing technology; an explosion in knowledge; globalization of the economy; and the need to adapt to change and diversity. The Valpo CoE in many ways is positioned to address these demands. But to do so, we will need to take necessary steps to strengthen enrollment and recruit top-notch faculty. The No. 1 way to accomplish this is by investing in the facility.

VALPO : How will a new facility help address these challenges?

Olejniczak: Facilities not only support the fundamental engineering education, but undergrad-uate research projects, senior design projects and national design competitions. Because they are so directly linked to the way engineers teach and learn, they need to be state of the art and flexible. The importance Valpo CoE places on facilities cannot be overstated. It's demonstrated by the fact that all labs are taught by profes-sors—not teaching assistants—and used by students begin-ning in their first year of study.

Well-equipped labs and top-notch facilities help draw the finest faculty and students to VU, as well as attract valuable research funding and visibility to the college. Improved facilities also will lead to continued excellent career placement rates for CoE graduates and more rapid progression of alumni in their careers.

VALPO : What other areas need to be addressed?

Olejniczak : Though facilities are the CoE's greatest immediate need, the college also seeks to increase its endowment. It provides a stable and consistent source of revenue that funds endowed chairs for top-quality faculty members and endowed scholar-ships, which enable the best and brightest students, as well as those with significant financial needs, to attend VU.