CSUN Reaches Out to Engineering’s Next Generation
Innovative Program Enlists 71 High School Students for Online College-Credit Course

Reaching out to the next generation of bright young minds, Cal State Northridge has launched an innovative program that could inspire dozens of local high school students to study engineering.

A group of local high school juniors and seniors recently made its first official visit to a CSUN engineering lab as the newest members of manufacturing systems engineering and management professor Tarek Shraibati’s “Introduction to Engineering,” an online, college-credit course offered for the first time to students at eight area high schools.

“The idea is that, hopefully, the students will decide to go on to an engineering school, maybe even CSUN,” said Shraibati, robotics lab director. “But even if that doesn’t happen, these young people are taking a college-credit course that will help them in the future, showing them that college is not inaccessible.”

Monroe, San Fernando, Granada Hills, El Camino Real, Chaminade, Fraizer Mountain, Northridge Academy and Fulton College Preparatory School are the home schools for the 71 students in the program.

They complete a one-hour session per week and follow up with lab work at their schools, supervised by teachers who have the background and training to support their work.

“Not an Advanced Placement class, this is an actual college course, similar to one I teach for students here at CSUN,” said Shraibati, whose lectures include the design process, study skills, time management and other information leading to college success.

The teens’ work will culminate with their participation in the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Tech Challenge, a regional robotics competition designed to excite young people about careers in science and engineering.

Students from each participating school will design a robot using a Vex Robotic Design System, which Shraibati calls “an erector set on steroids.” The students are going to discover that engineering is serious work, Shraibati said, “but it’s not boring.”

Manufacturing systems engineering and management chair Bonita Campbell said the “exceptionally qualified” high school teachers who participate in the ACCESS (Accelerated Coursework for Computer Science and Engineering Student Success) Program are appointed as part-time faculty with her department.

Karla Johnson-Majedi, director of the Student Services/EOP Satellite in the College of Engineering and Computer Science—which helped set up the program with the high schools—said the demand for the online course already is so high that it will be expanded next year and beyond.

“Research shows that once you bring a young person to a college campus, they are more likely to return as a student,” she said. “There is such a shortage of engineers out there. It would be outstanding if some of these high school kids came back and studied engineering at CSUN.”

‘Climate Crisis’: Not Your Average Chat About the Weather
‘Speak Your Mind’ Lecturer is Active on Nobel Prize-Winning UN Climate Change Panel

One of the world’s foremost experts in the field of climate change will launch Cal State Northridge’s 2007-08 Speak Your Mind lecture series at 12:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 25, in the campus Plaza del Sol Performance Hall, University Student Union.

Stephen H. Schneider of Stanford University is actively involved with the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which last week was named co-winner of the Nobel Peace Prize with former Vice President Al Gore. He will address the series’ discussion theme for the year—the environment—in a talk called “Climate Crisis: Can California Cope?”

Frequently cited as a compelling speaker with a gift for communicating the complexities of global climate change, the scientist has noted that California often is in the forefront of climate change activities.