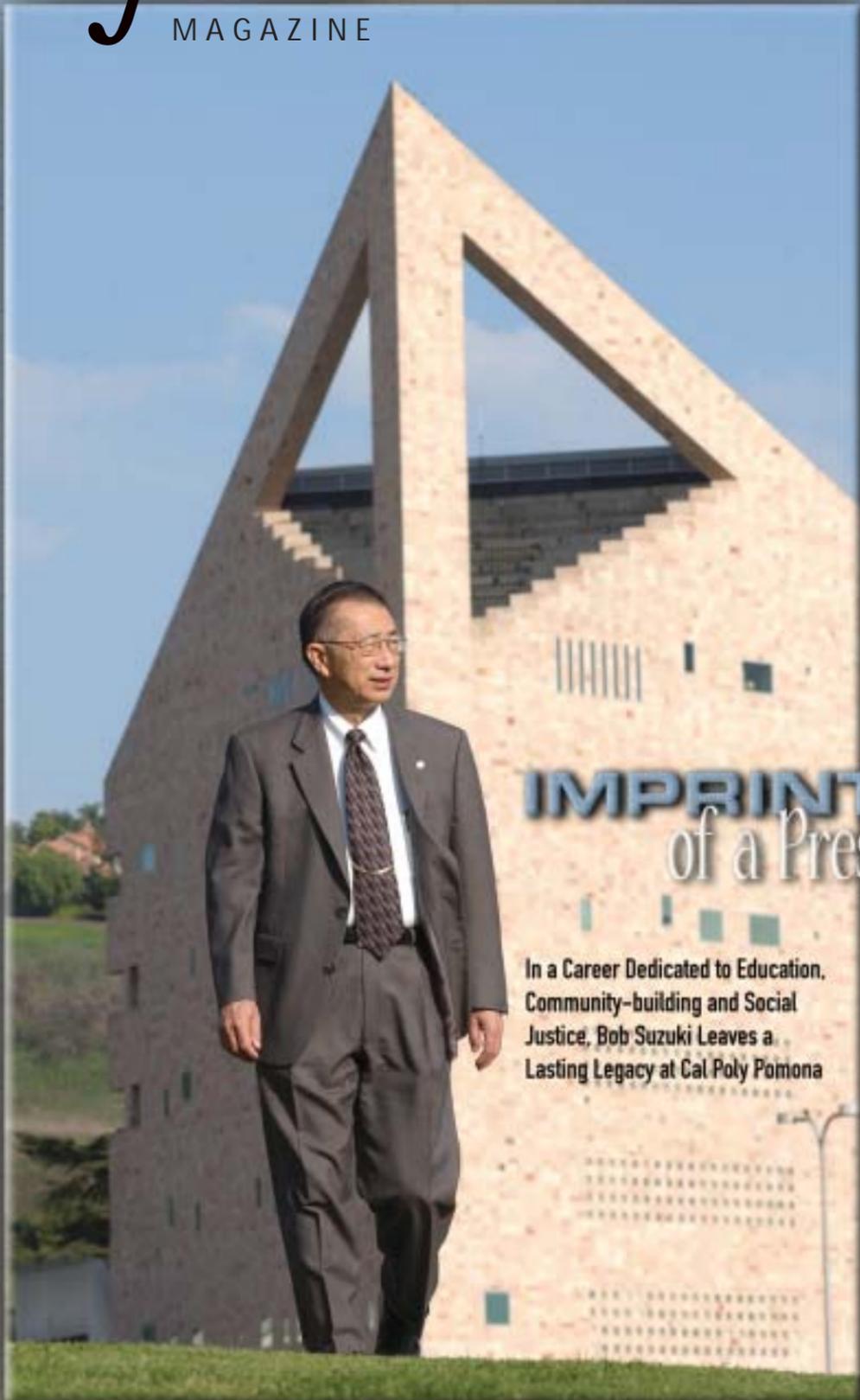


# PolyTrends

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MAGAZINE



## IMPRINT of a President

In a Career Dedicated to Education,  
Community-building and Social  
Justice, Bob Suzuki Leaves a  
Lasting Legacy at Cal Poly Pomona

CAL POLY POMONA

# From Premise to

# P R O M I S E

Entrepreneur Quest Seeks to Help Businesses, Individuals Realize Product Potential



Mel Futrell and Jason Clemens are developing a portable collision avoidance system that offers pilots an affordable option to larger, installed systems.

Photos by Tom Zasadzinski

By Charles Bentley

WHEN IT COMES TO IDEAS, KNOWING A GOOD thing when you see it is an important step. It's typically just the first step, with plenty more remaining between recognition and realization.

Barney Path first learned of EnerGcard, a product already in operation in Europe and South America, several years ago while working for Siemens Corporation. Primarily intended for use in hotels and motels, the device regulates power flow into guest rooms utilizing the same cards used as door keys and offers management potential energy savings of between 30 and 60 percent.

When Path started his own consulting and design firm, Claremont-based PATHEnergy, he contacted the developers of EnerGcard. While they hadn't had much success in the United States, Path was sure he knew how to promote it to potential clients.

"I tried on my own to market it. About two years ago, I went out to Palm Springs, which should be a terrific market for this product," says Path. "It proved very frustrating."

It was while reading a local newspaper that Path came across a story on Entrepreneur Quest, a program offered at Cal Poly Pomona's Center for Training, Technology & Incubation (CTTI).

Designed to provide assistance and access to individuals and small businesses in need of help with new ideas or existing products, Entrepreneur Quest presented the kind of help he needed.



Julie Holland of the university's technology commercialization centers believes that "commitment and ideas drive innovation."

"I was intrigued, especially after what I'd been through," says Path, a former ASI president who graduated from Cal Poly Pomona in 1979. "I was wondering if my product was worth the time, energy and money I was willing to commit. So I decided to go through the program and attempt to assess the viability."

Sponsored by the United States Department of Labor, which provided all \$1.059 million in funding over the initial 24 months of operation, Entrepreneur Quest offers one-on-one support, formal advising, classroom instruction and work space at no cost to selected participants. First started in November 2002, it's intended to provide a resource to help develop business opportunities and, in turn, strengthen local economic development.

"History proves that commitment and ideas drive innovation," says Julie Holland, director of technology commercialization centers at CTTI. "Entrepreneur Quest adds structure and support to this powerful combination."

Applications are available to all interested individuals or businesses with a product or product idea who are willing to commit the time to take part in the program. Some 8-10 applicants are admitted each quarter. During that time, participants work closely with a select team of private sector consultants, university faculty and student interns.

"This isn't like some weekend seminar where individuals pay hundreds of dollars to sit through a couple of lectures and come away with nothing more than a three-ring binder filled with suggestions," explains Holland. "Entrepreneur Quest participants are provided with continuing professional support and assistance to complete market assessment for their product. And the classroom instruction is structured, so the concepts and skills discussed are reinforced with one-on-one coaching."

Path, who participated in one of the project's initial sessions, admits to originally being skeptical.

"Entrepreneur Quest has helped bring both sides together and provide the numbers and direction we needed. They understand problems and challenges long before you ever encounter them. It's like getting free experience."

"I couldn't see if there was another angle they were working on," remembers Path, who has recommended the program to others since completing the first phase. "There are people on the street every day with ideas, and a large part of our economy is run by those kinds of ideas. Entrepreneur Quest isn't concerned with which engines are running; they want to see how many they can get running."

Mel Futrell, like Path, came to Entrepreneur Quest with an existing product. A general partner with AviaTech Concepts of North Hollywood, she is consulting with SureCheck Aviation Inc. of Vista on a portable collision avoidance unit that offers pilots and plane owners an affordable option to larger, installed systems.

It was while seeking potential financial support that Futrell learned about Entrepreneur Quest. Since she and members of SureCheck started the first phase this



*Barney Path demonstrates the EnerGcard, a device used to reduce energy costs for hotels, during a pitch to Entrepreneur Quest.*

spring, Futrell insists they all have "made more progress on [thinking through] some issues in four weeks" than in the prior three years combined.

"Entrepreneur Quest has helped bring both sides together and provide the numbers and direction we needed," says Futrell. "Their people have been out there working in the real world. They understand problems and challenges long before you ever encounter them. It's like getting free experience."

Experience is a key component for all concerned. Entrepreneur Quest is a functional extension of the university's "learn by doing" philosophy. It provides practical knowledge and valuable contacts that enhance students' capabilities and make them more attractive to potential employers. Students and faculty directly assist program participants, as well as interact with the area business community.

"I can understand the importance of a program like this from the interns' point of view," says Futrell. "They're getting a tremendous learning experience and making contacts that will help them when they get their degrees."

For participants completing the first phase with products showing strong potential, there are additional opportunities. Subsequent tracks offer help through the development cycle, creating a full business plan and acquiring a financial strategy. For those who are interested, there is available space for lease at CTTI (and soon at the adjacent Innovation Village). Ultimately, the decisions are left up to the participants. Entrepreneur Quest is there to point out choices.

"You hear people talk about not crossing a bridge until you get there, but if you get there and find it's already burning, you've spent time, money and energy for nothing," says Futrell. "So many times you can be way too close to a project. It takes someone with a broader view who isn't so attached to offer valid options."

**For more information on Entrepreneur Quest, visit [www.entrepreneurquest.csupomona.edu](http://www.entrepreneurquest.csupomona.edu) or call (909) 869-4699.**

**There are people on the street every day with ideas, and a large part of our economy is run by those kinds of ideas. Entrepreneur Quest isn't concerned with which engines are running; they want to see how many they can get running."**

(SUZUKI continued from page 12)

## Stepping Away

In SEPTEMBER 2002, SUZUKI ANNOUNCED HE would retire upon completing his 12th year as president to spend more time with his family and grandchildren.

"Agnes and I realized we won't continue to have good health and energy all of our lives," he says. "It was a hard decision. This position has a lot of gratifications when you see the progress being made and the impact on students. I love that, but I also know there are many other aspects of life to enjoy."

Although Suzuki will treasure the time he will be able to dedicate to his family and other interests, such as tennis, he will continue working part-time on the educational and multicultural issues that have driven him throughout his 67 years.

As the days pass and the campus prepares for another commencement celebration this June, the Suzukis are preparing for retirement together.



*Welcoming the audience at a unique community performance that brings the Los Angeles Philharmonic to Pomona annually.*

One of the last projects the Suzukis will see through completion is the George and Sakaye Aratani Japanese Garden, installed near the university's CLA Building. The timing of the dedication and grand opening of the garden this summer couldn't be more appropriate. The Aratani Garden is meant to foster peaceful reflection and the appreciation of nature and culture, as well as an enhanced educational experience—some of the very things the Suzukis have struggled to improve through their decades of commitment.

(PERSPECTIVE continued from page 13)

the last moment it goes off to the printer. Nametags are made for the student ushers, and listed are their second or third languages needed to aid guests. Roustabouts, or student stagehands, position radio antennae or help off-load 500 gallons of water for our guests.

In spite of all of the teamwork, all of the planning, and all of the preparation, there are always unanticipated events—like the year an unexpected rainstorm soaked the seats overnight. Fortunately, we keep three leaf blowers, borrowed from the grounds crew, backstage. Starting in the graduate seating section (remember, the star of the show is the student in the black robe!), roustabouts blew water off the seats so when the graduates and guests arrived, most of the seats were dry...or at least not soaked.

Graduate students are "hooded" by their graduate advisors, symbolically welcoming them to the higher level of academe. We have a six-inch step for those who need it, but one faculty advisor insisted he didn't need one, although he is about 5-foot-4. After he ended up placing the hood on the third student's nose, we got him the step and whispered to him, "the photographers can't see you when you hood. Please use this, so you'll be in the picture."

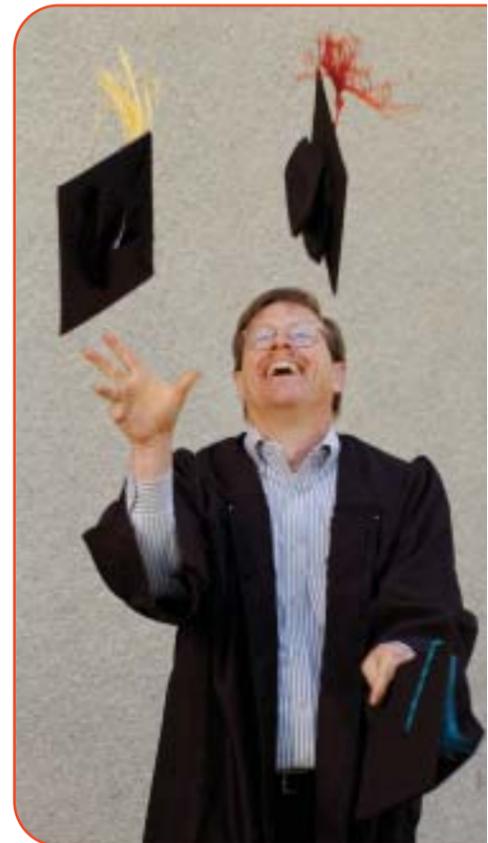
Honorary doctorates are awarded on rare occasions. Rarer still is the speed with which a staff member ran from the stage to her dean's office to get a missing hood about to be placed on the honoree. She couldn't quite make it back through the crowd before the reading of the dean's citation, so she threw it over some heads to me, I gave it to a student, who crawled through the trees on the back of the stage and placed it on the table a good seven seconds before the dean turned to pick it up. By the way, the dean never knew of the close call.

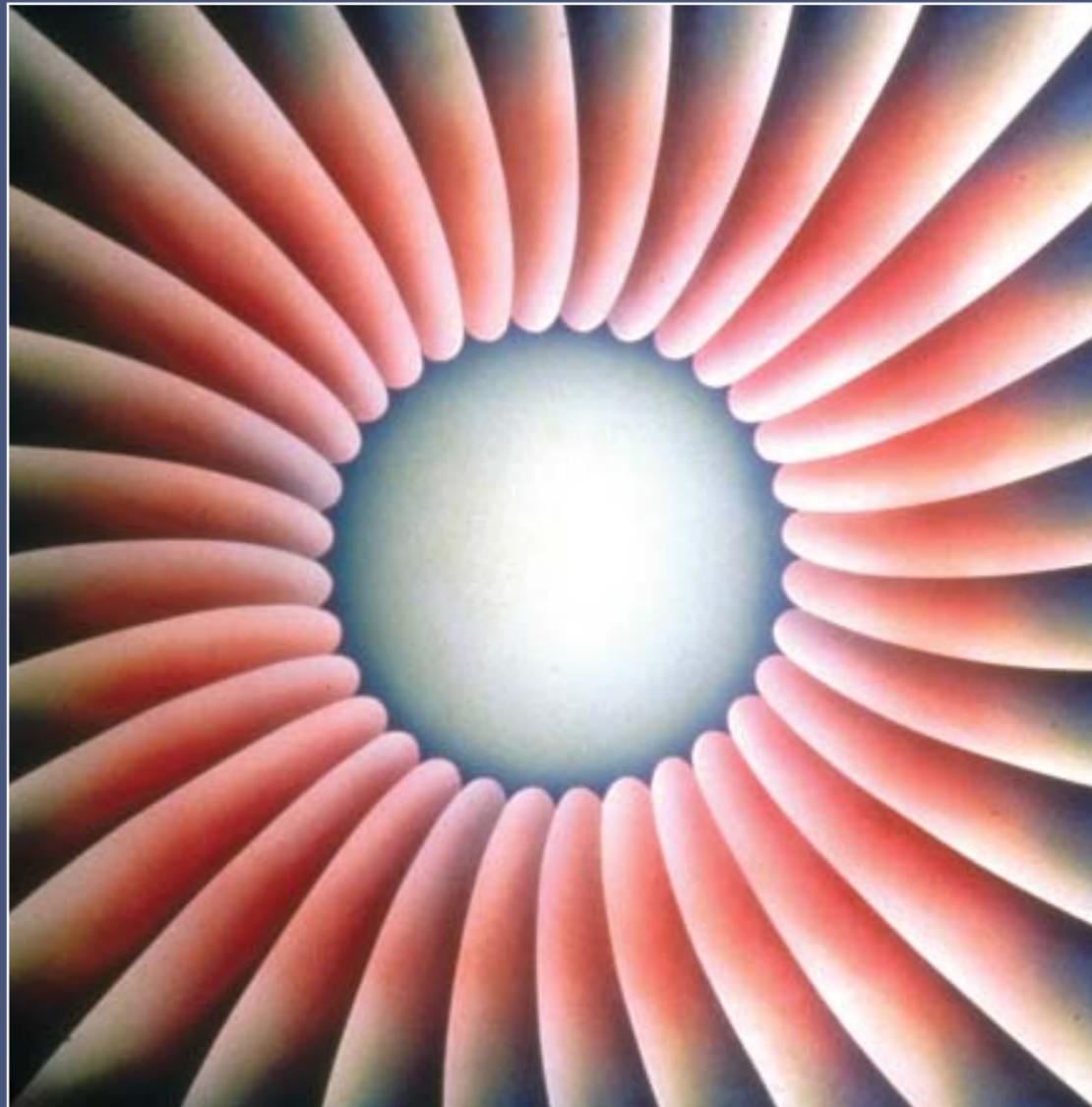
I have marveled at the number of students who talk on their cell phones during line-up, procession and the ceremony. With whom could they possibly be speaking? I got the answer one year when a young graduate, about to go up on the stage with a cell phone to her ear, frantically waved me over. "My mother is in the hospital at the City of Hope and couldn't be here today. Would you please hold this up to the speaker, so she can hear my name?" I couldn't tell if the student smiled when she got her well-deserved diploma—there must have been something in my eye.

Over the years, I've sneaked in tardy students, so their parents wouldn't know they had arrived late. I've pulled more beach balls from the crowd than most ushers at Dodger Stadium. I have assisted a helicopter pilot with landing on the soccer field, so a dedicated dad could attend his son's graduation in San Diego at 10 a.m. and his daughter's at Cal Poly Pomona at 2 p.m. I've slipped a note to a graduate to tell him it was time for him to leave; his wife was going into labor, two weeks early, and was available in the ambulance—but not for long. And I've driven around far too many parking lots helping a graduate's grandpa find his car, which he KNOWS he parked by a tree. In a big lot. Next to a white car. Four hours ago.

Every year, our commencement ceremonies are better than the year before because each member of the team strives to make it so. When it's all over, I am exhausted. Yet, no matter how tired I get or how sunburned I become, when I see a beaming mom and dad with a happy graduate between them, smiling for the camera, I know it's worth it. Every minute we put in, it's worth it. The graduates in the black robes were stars on stage for six seconds, but in their parents' eyes, they'll always be stars. And I helped make it happen.

**In addition to juggling commencement responsibilities, Dave Johnson serves as director of judicial affairs.**





Donald Woodman

### THROUGH THE FLOWER, **JUDY CHICAGO**, 1973

Artist Judy Chicago and photographer Donald Woodman will facilitate a unique, interdisciplinary project involving the arts, education and the greater community in "Envisioning the Future," a collaborative effort to imagine, create and exhibit diverse images of the future.

#### ATTENTION ALUMNI PARENTS:

Please share  
new addresses of  
sons and daughters  
who are  
Cal Poly Pomona  
graduates.

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