US News Ranks USC Engineering Number 8

The University of Southern California School of Engineering consolidated its position in the nation's top engineering schools by maintaining eighth place for the second consecutive year in the prestigious U.S. News & World Report rankings of graduate schools.

"I'm ecstatic that we're ranked number eight for the second straight year. Nine years ago we were number 21 and our trend line has been consistently upward," said Dean C. L. Max Nikias.

Nikias said a major reason for the ranking success was the quality of the faculty: "The faculty should take pride that their hard work and academic prowess is increasingly being recognized. I am proud of their success."

As it did last year, USC engineering led the nation's engineering schools in research funding per tenured faculty member, with each professor bringing in nearly $1 million in support from funding agencies.

The dean said that the engineering school had intensified efforts on urgent national priorities since 9-11 and that fully 70 percent of the $120 million in annual research funding was defense-related. He added that success in attracting research funding reflected a crucial vote of confidence.

"This is an excellent engineering school and the funding agencies know it," he said. "We will continue to climb as more of our peers learn about the academic excellence we are building in our research and education programs."

Nikias said the school was engaged in a series of research and curriculum initiatives aimed at improving the school, including:

- A major effort in robotics, involving numerous faculty in a range of departments, including the school's Information Sciences Institute.
- Continuing introduction of new degree programs with six new masters degrees planned for the fall.
- Expansion of the school's Distance Education Network, one of the largest and most successful in engineering education, enrolling hundreds of students at corporations across the country including Boeing, Qualcomm, United Technologies Corporation, Intel, Aerospace Corporation, Raytheon, Ericsson, SAIC, Northrop-Grumman and Lockheed Martin.
- Continued growth in bioengineering, particularly with the university's Alfred E. Mann Institute for Biomedical Engineering.
- Advancing research in nanotechnology and continuing strength in micro-electromechanical systems, or MEMS.
- Advanced computational research, including development of the Globus open source grid computing middleware in conjunction with Argonne Laboratories, successful prototyping of advanced processor-in-memory chips and continued expansion of the USC Linux Cluster supercomputer.

Nikias said that the forward momentum of the engineering school has been aided by the overall success of USC under President Steven B. Sample who like Nikias is an electrical engineer and a member of the faculty of the engineering school.

"Steve Sample has successfully raised money and academic standards for all of USC," said Nikias. "I am privileged to serve a great university president, and our school has benefited immensely from his stewardship."

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