STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

6 Questions with

Joselyne Martinez (Hollister, California)

Civil Engineering

Why did you choose engineering?

I'm a first-generation student whose mother, like many others, decided to move to the U.S. from Guadalajara, Mexico, seeking a better future for herself and her children. Growing up in a foreign place, I had to adapt to my new home and learn a new language, all while attempting not to fall behind in my studies. This is a lot to bear for any 9-year-old, and as a result, I fell behind in all my subjects in school, especially science and math. It took me a long time to catch up academically to my counterparts, but I achieved this in early high school. A math/science switch turned on at this time, and those subjects soon became my fun classes. My mother has always been my inspiration for all my academic success, and she's the one that told me I might like engineering. As usual, she was right. Civil engineering was the creative space I was looking for that incorporated math, science and the ability to have a direct impact on various communities.

What has been your favorite class and why?

My favorite class so far has been Geotechnical Engineering and its lab activity. From the beginning, I was absolutely thrilled to take this class because I was ready to apply what I had learned and practiced with Pacific Crest Engineering. It was fascinating to learn the fundamentals of why I was running certain soil tests, what the results meant and why (on a microscopic level) distinct soil types behave differently. This class made everything click!

What's your dream job after graduation?

I am mesmerized by tunnel engineering and underground construction. I want to work with a firm that has a reputable underground division and focuses on large-scale design-build projects. My dream job incorporates tackling geotechnical engineering challenges and overseeing project management responsibilities that focus on the tunneling industry. I look forward to working with my first Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) in the future, and maybe going inside one someday!

What do you think engineering's biggest impact on the world will be in the future?

The engineering industry as a unit needs to have a stronger moral compass. I am completely immersed in my academics, but even this can't distract me from the climate change and fundamental human rights crises our planet is facing. Engineers are responsible for creating greener infrastructure and giving future generations more than we take. However, our responsibilities should not stop in science and technology. The industry can have its greatest impact when engineers take responsibility for creating a better and equal future for all people.

Do you have a scholarship to help with your Cal Poly education?

I've worked hard to achieve my academic success in order to receive the financial support I need as a first-generation student. Over the years, I have been fortunate enough to receive various scholarships ranging from the Latinos in Technology Scholarship, awarded by the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and the Jimenez Family Scholarship, awarded by Cal Poly's Civil and Environmental Engineering Department. I also want to acknowledge the Women's Transportation Seminar Foundation for awarding me the WTS Molitoris Leadership Scholarship, an award meant for advancing women in engineering.

What was your path to Cal Poly?

My path to Cal Poly started at Cabrillo Community College in Aptos, California. I credit Cabrillo's remarkable engineering program and faculty for helping shape the student and person I am today. They taught me that civil engineering is a helping profession, and we must build equitable and sustainable infrastructure that will continue to improve the lives of all communities. When application season came around and it was time for me to transfer to a four-year institution, I realized very quickly that I needed to end up at Cal Poly. Every engineer I talked to encouraged me to attend Cal Poly because of the outstanding Learn by Doing approach. I knew Cal Poly would challenge me academically and would help connect me with a wide range of industry professionals.

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