STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

CAL POLY
College of Engineering

7 Questions with Warren Taira

Major: Mechanical Engineering

Hometown: San Martin, CA

What made you choose engineering?

I've spent the majority of my life designing practical solutions to real-world challenges, and I think that almost everyone has, at some point, engineered solutions to problems in their own lives. The opportunity to study and work in engineering formally just serves to strengthen the technical background that goes into this problem solving. I love that engineering provides a platform to apply theoretical principles in creative ways, essentially turning problem solving into a puzzle where a deeper understanding of theory allows for more efficient resource utilization to achieve goals. I chose to study engineering to build that understanding and apply it to improve peoples' lives.

What is your favorite place in San Luis Obispo County and why?

My favorite place in SLO County is easily Skipper's Brew Coffee House — it's a great place to stop by after class to knock out a quick work or study session on my way home. It has the perfect combination of good coffee, a friendly atmosphere and the potential for an occasional dog encounter.

What was your earliest engineering project?

As far back as I can remember, I've worked on small engineering projects. When I was about three, I admired my parents' computer so much that I worked on making my own, assembled from scrap circuit boards, wires and an electrical-tape-covered box. Mysteriously, even after drawing a keyboard on it, it didn't work, but it did signal the start to my passion for creatively approaching technical problems.

What has been your favorite class and why?

My favorite class at Cal Poly has easily been dynamics. It was equal parts challenging and rewarding, and it pushed me to develop better study habits and fully internalize the course material. Even when navigating small parts of everyday life, like hanging a shelf on a wall, I frequently find myself referring back to the principles introduced in both statics and dynamics, and I think that the course perfectly exemplifies the real-world applicability of theoretical engineering principles.

What's your dream job after graduation?

After graduation, I'm excited to go into commercial HVAC. My internship experience at Silicon Valley Mechanical further supported my interest in varied, multidisciplinary projects within a tangible scope. Engineering work in the construction industry perfectly matches up with that, with opportunities to work with a wide selection of requirements and specialty applications, coordinate with other trades and witness the advancement of the building process as it moves toward completion.

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

I believe that engineering's most significant future impact on the world will revolve around sustainability. As the world grapples with finite resources and the urgent need to preserve our planet, engineers will play a critical part in developing and implementing sustainable solutions. The future will require us to find innovative, clean and efficient ways to continue to advance industry and technology while minimizing environmental impact, ensuring that people can enjoy the best possible quality of life both today and in future generations.

How do you support the college's commitment to justice, equity, diversity and inclusion?

Every member of the college contributes to the diversity of experiences and thought within the CENG community. These intersections of personal identity and culture inherently shape the decisions that people make, both as students and as future engineers. I hope that, as an openly LGBTQ+ member of our campus community, I can contribute a varied perspective in these settings and help create safe spaces for younger engineers to step into by doing so. I've also been lucky enough to serve as a friend, mentor and resource for people as they figure out their identities and explore how they fit into the ecosystems of CENG and the university, and I hope to continue this throughout the rest of my time at Cal Poly.