

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

4 Questions with Tara Goddard

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What brought you to Cal Poly College of Engineering?

Cal Poly engineering is such a fantastic combination of bright, engaged students; dedicated faculty and staff; the top civil engineering undergraduate program in the nation; and one of the prettiest places in the country. What isn't to love? It was a great fit, and I am very happy to be back in California.

What do you want others to know about your research?

It isn't hard to make the case that everyone should care about road safety, since it affects all of us. There is a reason that it is a trope so common in TV and movies, that someone is affected by the serious injury or death of a loved one in a crash. What I want people to be aware of are all the ways we can contribute to safer transportation systems, whether by our own choices behind the wheel or what we demand of our policymakers for better regulations and funding.

What is your favorite part of your job?

I'm lucky to like basically every part of my job, even if it stresses me out sometimes! I even enjoy much of the dreaded committee work, like reviewing and updating curriculum. But advising is one of my favorites, because it lets me really get to know each student and their values and goals, and I get to provide advice and open doors for their individual professional paths.

What is the most helpful advice you've received?

I have been fortunate to learn from so many people I've encountered in my life, and it is hard to pick a favorite piece of advice. But as trite as it may be, "life is short" is definitely one of my guiding principles. I'm a cancer survivor, which certainly helped bring that home. I try to live with as much kindness and gratitude as possible and not leave regrets on the table.

