



NJIIT

SCHOOL OF
MANAGEMENT



A NEW VISION FOR SOM

INTERVIEW:

DEAN REGGIE J. CAUDILL

Reggie J. Caudill was named dean of the NJIT School of Management in June 2015. Since assuming the role of interim dean in September 2014, Caudill has led the SOM faculty initiative to develop the 2015 SOM Academic Plan, which provides a roadmap toward the future goals and expectations of the school to clearly differentiate its programs, leverage strengths across the university, and align directly with the NJIT Mission and 2020 *Vision* strategic priorities. He also guided the hiring of two new assistant professors to strengthen core disciplinary areas within the school and support new strategic research directions.

Caudill previously served as chair of the Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering; executive director of the Multi-lifecycle Engineering Center; and as executive director of the Center for Manufacturing Systems. He has authored or co-authored over 100 technical and scientific publications and served as chair of the IEEE Technical Committee on Electronics and the Environment, as well as conference and program chair for international symposia and conferences related to sustainability. He has also served as a member of the advisory committee for New Jersey's Clean Energy Manufacturing Fund.

He earned his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and his master's degree in engineering mechanics from the University of Alabama and his Ph.D. in mechanical engineering from the University of Minnesota.

Dean Caudill recently shared his thoughts about SOM and the school's potential for the future with Christina Crovetto, editor of *NJIT Magazine*.

Your academic background is in mechanical engineering. How does that background inform your thinking about management and business education?



Let me put this in the context of what's happening in business and in engineering. Since the very beginning, engineering has been technology-focused and technology-based and firmly rooted in technology. But what's

happened in the last decade is a convergence of business and technology that has never happened before. All these technologies that are all around us are changing the way we do business on an everyday basis and make decisions. Engineers are skilled at making good decisions based on rigorous analysis and the data you have available. Technology is an integral part of analysis and decision-making in engineering and the same thing in the business world. Being an engineer, originally I thought, "What would I be doing in the School of Management?" But the fact is that management and business and engineering just fit together.

The strengths I have in looking at the technology side – making decisions from an industrial engineering perspective – and then also being able to bring these technical skills and knowledge into business, I think is a very powerful combination. Looking at engineering and technology and business together is just the way that the world has converged and continues to accelerate. Also, I think coming from mechanical engineering, I've always been involved in exploring the challenges of systems – computer-based systems dealing with the world of manufacturing, automation and robotics, aerospace systems, transportation systems and sustainability – all the kinds of things that excite mechanical and industrial engineers. And so now within the School of Management, we can integrate business and management knowledge with STEM skills to give our students a competitive advantage in today's world of



SOM students are provided with unique opportunities to study in a program that is interdisciplinary and leverages strengths across NJIT from engineering and science to architecture and computer science.

global business. I think that's the context within which an engineer and business and management major fit together very nicely; and, as I said it's a powerful combination.

In your new role as SOM dean, what are your immediate priorities?

We have two major priorities for this coming year. We are accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the highest standard of achievement for business schools worldwide. This year, we will be implementing changes and preparing for an accreditation peer-review team coming to visit with us in the winter of 2017. So, one of our priorities for this year is to get everything in order so that we can clearly show how we are meeting all the guidelines and standards associated with AACSB. Obviously, maintaining accreditation is extremely important for us. The other priority is connected with accreditation and involves implementation of the Academic

Plan our faculty developed last year. This plan is not only a vision, but is a roadmap, compass and touchstone for transforming the School of Management. This year, we will begin implementing our plan.

What inspires you as a leader?

In an academic setting, I think leadership involves challenging the very essence of who you are and how you do things. We are not satisfied with saying, "This is the way we've always done it, so let's just continue." This last year, we did challenge our faculty in asking, "What should the School of Management be, what makes us different, distinctive, and adds value for our students, and how are we going to get there together?"

To me, a good leader is someone who asks these questions and encourages everyone to be engaged; creating a common vision that is embraced by everyone and then being able to implement those strategies so that vision becomes a shared reality that everyone embraces and contributes toward. In an academic environment, collegiality and making sure that everyone stays on the same page is extremely important – that is what leadership

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to me. I have always been very fortunate to work with outstanding faculty and know that we are moving in the right direction to make the School of Management a strong, vibrant and integral part of the university community.

What distinguishes SOM from other management schools?

With the convergence of business and technology in the business world, companies are looking for people who understand business fundamentals, but also have technology skills. We have the opportunity to create a new generation of business and management professionals who really understand the business and management side and also have the technical skills to be successful. Why would you not want to go to a business and management program at a very strong science and technology-based university? Because that’s where the future is! It just really makes sense that the School of Management at NJIT is the model for business and management education in the future.

What are some examples of how SOM provides unique real-world opportunities for students? And how is SOM partnering with business and industry to the benefit of students?

One good example is that we tie into the Enterprise Development Center (EDC), which provides an opportunity that is almost unique for our students to be able to work with entrepreneurs and small, technology-based start-ups, and the opportunity for our business students to work in teams with engineers and computer scientists in innovation competitions and challenges. We must provide experiential opportunities that go beyond the classroom to bring real-world experiences to our students. We must strive to make these experiential and cooperative education opportunities available to all of our students. This would provide our students with a distinct advantage over others. This will also benefit our corporate partners and strengthen our relationships with these corporations.

Our Academic Plan was developed with close collaboration with our corporate leaders who



SOM provides a strong foundation in business and management principles with a focus on the analytic and technology skills necessary to succeed in today’s data-driven world of global business.

are members of the school’s Advisory Board. It wasn’t just something we sat back and dreamed up. Our industry partners helped shape the vision for the school that really satisfies a major need for the type of business professional that didn’t exist a few years ago. We want to develop a strong, vibrant School of Management and the way to do this is to leverage the strengths of the rest of this university. We are rebuilding our business and management programs based on STEM technology and close collaboration across the STEM fields.

What are your thoughts about strengthening relationships with alumni?

These relationships are extremely important. We have a great alumni base, many of whom are engineers who get involved very quickly in the business and management aspects of their companies. Whether you’ve graduated as an engineer or computer scientist, or an architect, or go on to medical school, you end up in some

way dealing with business and management concerns and issues. Our alumni base can be a window in understanding what skills are really important for success, can open doors for our graduates and also bring real-world knowledge and experience back to our students. All of our undergraduate and graduate programs benefit greatly from these interactions. What better resource to help shape future generations of NJIT graduates than our alumni base?

What do you hope to achieve in the next five years?

Our academic plan is a five-year plan and we are moving quickly to implement our strategic initiatives and actions. The plan is very bold and aggressive, but achievable. We just need to make sure we keep everyone engaged and involved so that together to make it happen. We encourage others to share in the vision for a strong and vibrant School of Management and to join us in this journey. ■

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