

The big picture

Prof engineers projects that link students' knowledge

By **CALEB SHAEFFER**

Staff Writer

When he was a student, Dr. Wieslaw "Wes" Grebski found that each of the classes he took didn't fit together. As an engineering major, he had classes in math and science, but neither seemed to relate to each other.

In graduate school, though, Grebski started to combine the knowledge he learned in all his courses to work toward a large project. He compared it to taking the pieces of a puzzle and then putting the puzzle together; he finally saw the big picture.

As a professor at Penn State Hazleton, Grebski thought it would be better if his students were able to reach this point where all the classes fit together early in their academic careers. Like a puzzle takes each piece to create a picture, a project would take knowledge learned from each course to work toward an end goal.

That's why the last few years, he had his students work on projects — a solar-powered car, a lightweight airplane, and a wind turbine.

"If I show you individual pieces of the puzzle, it doesn't make sense," said

Grebski, 58, of Pringle. "(With the projects) they see the big picture. They know where that piece goes."

Many of the projects Grebski wants his students to complete today use alternative energy. He thinks that by turning the students on to alternative energy sources, it will inspire them to consider implementing these technologies in their day-to-day lives.

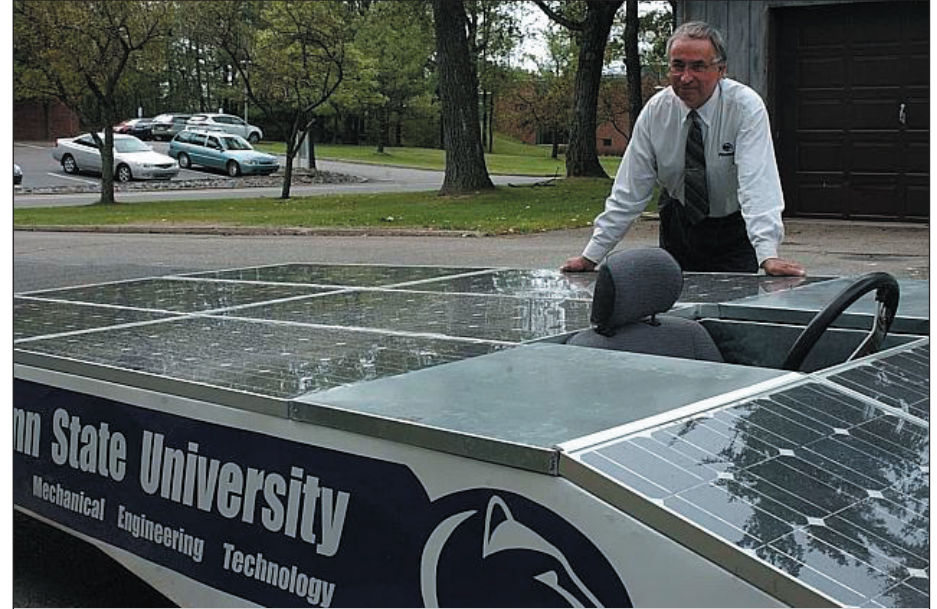
"You need to translate the advanced technology and put it into something they can use," said Grebski, who has designed a water heater using NASA-designed glass tubes at his home.

Ten months out of the year, Grebski uses his glass-tube water heater; he said five of them together could heat and air condition a house.

For the students' next project, Grebski hopes to design and construct a zero-utility building. A zero-utility building uses no outside sources of energy, and is powered by sunlight, solar panels, and windmills.

He hopes to have a building complete by this time next year, and have engineering students living there to measure power levels in the structure.

This, of course, is in the future — and Grebski needs to make sure fund-



ERIC CONOVER/Staff Photographer

Wes Grebski, professor of engineering at Penn State Hazleton, poses with a solar-powered car, one of the many projects he's worked on with students.

ing is in place before he makes any definite plans.

But, in the last five years, Grebski has made up his mind about how important it is to study alternative energy sources. He wants to make Penn State Hazleton advance its curriculum and focus more on alternative energy, to face the oncoming energy crisis.

"If we like it or not, it's going to be the way of the future," Grebski said.

Grebski was born in Poland, and received his bachelor's, master's, and

doctorate degrees from the University of Mining and Metallurgy. He taught mechanical engineering in Poland for six and a half years before he moved to the United States in the early 1980s.

He came to America because he had family here and was discontent with the political climate in Poland. His mother was born in Chicago, so it was not a problem for him to immigrate into the country.

He moved into his aunt's house in

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Educational council steers campus to brighter future

■ The Hazleton Educational Council, formed during World War II to keep the Penn State Center open, works at several levels to support the community and campus administration.

By **BOBBY MASO**

Staff Writer

A change in leadership has been set for one local community and educational organization, but members of the group say it only means bigger and better things for everyone.

Effective this month, there will be a new president at the helm of the Hazleton Educational Council, an organization formed in 1943 to – among other things – keep the Hazleton campus of Penn State open during war time.

Pasco Schiavo, a Hazleton attorney, will assume leadership, replacing Gary Lamont of Drums.

The switch is due to Lamont's two-year term on the board ending. He will now remain on the board, serving in other capacities.

"It's a serious responsibility. There's no doubt about that," Schiavo said recently about his feelings on taking the leadership role.

"I look upon it as still being equal to all other members, but with the added responsibility of doing as much as I can with them and seeing that our efforts are directed to the right people at University Park and to potential, philanthropic gift donors to Penn State Hazleton," he said.

Schiavo, currently the council's first vice-president, said he is excited at the opportunity to further his activities on the board and is already planning to dive right into action, all with the well-being of the

school in mind.

"Right now, one of the big things we are looking at is raising additional money for scholarships and enhancing educational programs at the Hazleton campus. This includes scholarships now available for students coming to the school, including students from the Hazleton area community."

Schiavo became involved with the council years ago because he sees it as an important, positive part of the community. "And anything we do comes back and improves the quality of the community," he said.

Lamont agreed, noting the array of activities the educational council is involved in with the school.

"The council really does have such a great, rich history of support for both community and adminis-

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Pringle, and applied for teaching jobs in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Before long, he married his wife Helen and found his position at Penn State Hazleton.

Many students express their thanks to "Doc" for their later success in engineering. In 2007, Grebski was even awarded the Milton S. Eisenhower Award for Distinguished Teaching.

John Skopek, 22, had Dr. Grebski for a class at Penn State Hazleton before he moved to the main campus, where he finished his Bachelor of Science in

engineering. Out of all his professors, Grebski was Skopek's favorite because of Grebski's enthusiasm and passion.

Skopek now works for Electric Boat in Connecticut and is studying for a Master's of Science from the Worcester Polytechnic Institute of Technology. Whenever Skopek comes home to Mountain Top, he tries to meet Dr. Grebski for lunch, or even to take the solar car out for a spin.

"When I felt discouraged, I would go and talk to him. Just the presence of him, it would pick me up and inspire me — to see that there is light at the

end of the tunnel," Skopek said.

Dhaval Bhalodia, 22, a senior at Penn State University Park, also had Dr. Grebski for an engineering course at Penn State Hazleton, and he said that Grebski devoted a lot of time to his teaching.

Bhalodia said Grebski tried to promote interest in engineering not only with his students, but also with younger students, by holding a summer camp devoted to engineering and science for middle school and high school students.

"Dr. Grebski was probably the best

professor I ever had, and the best teacher I ever had," said Bhalodia, who is from Conyngham. "We got to work with him quite a bit. He provided a lot of opportunities for us."

Grebski's wife retired from teaching at Dodson Elementary not too long ago, and Grebski promised her he would retire after 25 years. But, with so many advances in alternative energy, it will be a challenge to keep his word.

"Things are too exciting to retire," Grebski said with a smile.

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