

LIFELONG LEARNING

By Tom Schott

Jen (Korslin) Marvin (CEM'92, PG'10) is a Boilermaker through and through.

Her educational journey involved traditional classwork in construction engineering and management in classrooms and labs in Purdue University's famed red-brick buildings. It also included working on class projects and papers from her house through what is now Purdue Global's Concord Law School.

It all started when Marvin was an elementary school student in Brookfield, Wisconsin, and she was introduced to engineering by the mother of one of her friends. Marie Kustermann took Jen and other girls to local outreach programs and ultimately to visit Purdue. It led to Jen matriculating to West Lafayette on her journey as a lifelong learner.

"My family doesn't have an engineering background, so Mrs. Kustermann really is responsible for me going to Purdue," Marvin says. "She took five of us there when we were high school sophomores—two wound up there, and all five became engineers. I was the first engineer in my family, and I had a great experience at Purdue. The brand name for engineering is obviously outstanding."

Marvin received her bachelor's degree in construction engineering and management in 1992 and subsequently began a distinguished career that has taken her from the Chicago Bridge and Iron Company to the Fluor Corporation, Kimberly-Clark, and Boeing, where she has spent the last 16-plus years. She has earned multiple promotions while working in many diverse capacities at Boeing: designing the overhead stow bins for 737 and 777 aircraft; enforcing intellectual property rights; building the 787 aircraft with over 300 mechanics; and integrating environment, health, and safety requirements into the airline industry. She is now a senior project engineer in product development in Bothell, Washington.

"I am part of a large team that is designing future airplanes," Marvin says. "I manage a portfolio of nearly 50 projects that Boeing is working on with partners in California, Korea, and Japan. It's almost like a business development role."

In 2002, Marvin decided to pursue a law degree. She had been accepted into Marquette University Law School five years earlier—about the same time she learned she was pregnant with her second daughter.

"Working and taking law school classes at night with one child and another on the way didn't seem like a good formula, so I searched for online programs and learned about Concord Law School," Marvin says. "I didn't go right away, but when my daughters were older, I decided to take on the challenge as an adult learner with a family.

"It was an outstanding program, and I learned so much. During that time, I moved from Kimberly-Clark to Boeing. There was an adjustment workwise, and I paused going to school but had no issues picking it back up. Engineering and law have a very similar thought process, and having both degrees has really benefited me in my career."

A registered patent agent, Marvin earned her juris doctor degree in 2010 and was thrilled to see Concord become part of the Purdue family when Purdue Global was formed in 2018.

“I felt like I hit the lottery,” Marvin says. “Online learning still has a little bit of a stigma associated with it, but when Purdue—a well-respected brick and mortar university—acquired Concord, it supported the credibility I experienced as a law student. Being able to offer engineering and law degrees is a real feather in Purdue’s cap because there are so many ways to use them in tandem.”

Concord Law School is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2023. Martin Pritikin, Purdue Global vice president and dean of Concord, says dual degrees in law and engineering “can be a very powerful combination. It is important for those in the sciences to have a background in patent law so they understand how innovations are protected through intellectual property laws. In addition, construction and aerospace are highly regulated fields, and knowing how to ensure compliance with regulations, how to advocate with administrative agencies or regulatory bodies, and how to avoid pitfalls can be critical to managing those industries effectively. And of course, legal issues arise in that sector just like countless others, from contract negotiations to HR issues.”

In true Boilermaker spirit, Marvin is paying it forward. In January 2022, she joined the Career Accelerator Leadership Program, where she coaches women engineers on career advancement and works on ways to close the pay gap between men and women in the profession. Marvin also serves on the board of directors of Housing Hope, a nonprofit that strives to reduce homelessness and poverty for residents of Snohomish County in Washington.

Through it all, Marvin has fond memories of her time at Purdue, where she was a member of Phi Beta Chi sorority. She has come back to campus multiple times to recruit for both Kimberly-Clark and Boeing and was on campus last fall for a gathering with sorority sisters.

“There are three or four of my sorority sisters who I get together with about once a year,” says Marvin, who is proud to have a nephew follow in her footsteps to Purdue. “Two other women were engineers, and we chat almost quarterly. I made so many wonderful connections at Purdue that I value to this day.”

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