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What is your favorite Madison/campus memory?

I remember once walking on frozen Lake Mendota from Memorial Union to Picnic Point on a bitter cold December day. I still wonder, “What was I thinking”?

What has helped you achieve success in your career?

I have made it a point to be honest, trustworthy and a hard worker. I also think it is important to discover, remember and focus on what makes me passionate about the research topics on which I’ve chosen to work. Passion helps me to go the extra mile. I learned this during my years in Madison.

Outside of class, what experiences did you find most meaningful?

When I was an undergraduate, I started the Iranian Student Cultural Organization on campus, which focused on Persian culture and helped many newcomers every year.

What excites you about the future of engineering?

Today engineers are interested in addressing global causes. They are thinking of areas outside traditional technological domains where they can use their expertise to make a difference, and they are working with experts in disciplines outside of engineering to make it happen. For example, my own research has shifted to technologies that I hope will impact health care. Others I know are using their engineering skills to bring life-saving help to developing countries. It is exciting to see engineering take on these challenges.

Besides engineering, do you have another passion you have pursued or would have liked to pursue given the time?

My work never seems like work to me, so I think I chose the right profession. But if I had to choose something else, it might be directing movies. Movies are one of my hobbies. When I prepare and give a presentation on my research, it reminds me of the kind of planning and storytelling that go into producing a movie.

Who was an influential peer/professor from your time at UW-Madison?

Professor Denice Denton, my Ph.D. advisor, was the person who got me focused on microelectronics research. She changed my life, and not just by steering me into my academic life’s work. She had a great influence on how I see the world and my place in it. This summer in Madison I hosted a national workshop for emerging academic leaders in her honor. I was inspired to put the workshop together because of Denice’s work for women and underrepresented minorities.

What are you most proud of in life? What is your greatest achievement?

I am grateful for the privilege and opportunity to come to the United States and then to pursue a higher education. I believe the students I have mentored over the years are my greatest achievement; they are the next links in the chain of mentoring of which I am also a part.

What would be your advice to current students? What do you wish you had known?

I'd like students to understand the tremendous opportunity they have to make a difference in the world when they apply the knowledge they've gained to real problems. We engineers can be so creative because of the technology available to us. Everyone can make a contribution!