



## LOCAL GENTRY



Belle Wei, Dean of Engineering,  
San Jose State University

PHOTO: RIO COSTANTINI

### Dean Belle Wei **Opening Doors**

While the medical and legal fields are enrolling and graduating men and women in relatively equal measure, in the world of engineering that ratio is still far out of balance—even in Silicon Valley. And women's enrollment has been declining over the past five years.

San Jose State University's Dean of Engineering, Belle Wei, is one woman who has risen to the top. She is not to be singled out on account of her rarity (out of 345 Deans of Engineering in the U.S.,

only 15, or 4 percent, are women), but because of her vision and energetic faith in her field. "On a daily level I don't think being a woman makes a difference in how I approach my job," says Wei. Still, Wei recognizes that she is a visible role model, and wants to inspire young women to study engineering. Her vision includes the main theme embraced by the college—the global and innovative application of engineering knowledge and skills to better the world. "We do have that goal in mind—to better the world," adds Wei. "We also have an ethical obligation to do so. And Silicon Valley has come to symbolize this tech-

nological innovation." Indeed, most of Wei's graduates remain in the area, which Wei embraces for its unique dynamism and energy level. "It's about translating that energy into action and results. And here, the best and the brightest converge on Silicon Valley from all over the world."

Originally from Taiwan herself, Wei moved to San Francisco at the age of 18 and earned her Ph.D from UC Berkeley. With San Jose State University since 1987, this is Wei's fourth year as Dean. "This is home," she says with a seemingly ever-present and down-to-earth smile. "I think this is the best place in the world." ■