

Committed To Engineering And Education: Diane Sarlo-Montalto

From roasting coffee to brewing beer and manufacturing pharmaceuticals, a day's work has been very diverse for Diane Sarlo-Montalto since she graduated from NJIT in 1982. A chemical engineer, she has also allotted time in a demanding schedule to maintain close ties with NJIT and was recently named to the university's board of trustees.

The first in the Sarlo family to attend NJIT, Sarlo-Montalto was followed by her brothers Charles and Paul. Charles, now an attorney, earned a chemical engineering degree in 1984. Paul, profiled in the fall 2004 issue of *NJIT Magazine*, is a 1992 grad in civil engineering and New Jersey state senator representing a district that includes the family's home community of Wood-Ridge.

Sarlo-Montalto's siblings may very well have been influenced by the enthusiasm she continues to express with respect to NJIT. "I had an outstanding educational experience in every way," she says of the school she chose after considering options such as Rutgers and Stevens. Sarlo-Montalto's choice of college, and decision to study chemical engineering, reflects the mentoring of a high-school chemistry teacher. "I was really good at math and science but unsure about a college major," she explains. "The suggestion that I consider chemical engineering was great. It was also a time when encouragement for young women to build careers in science and technology was on the rise."

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Sarlo-Montalto started her career as a process engineer with coffee producer Maxwell House, a position she found attractive because of the experience it offered in a hands-on manufacturing environment. While working for Maxwell House, she completed an MBA at Fairleigh Dickinson University. She then moved on to the challenges of the pharmaceutical field as a project engineer at Lederle Laboratories in Pearl River, New York.

In 1989, Sarlo-Montalto accepted a position not far from NJIT that gave her career a boost with greater responsibility and potential. She went to work at the Anheuser-Busch brewery in Newark, where she managed multi-million-dollar capital projects and eventually supervised a wide range of maintenance and production operations. She had to marshal the skills of many craftspeople — among them electricians, machinists and pipefitters — to meet the production demands of a facility running around the clock, seven days a week. "I was even responsible for keeping the wings flapping on that



huge neon eagle," she says, referring to the animated logo high atop the Anheuser-Busch plant that has long been an industrial icon in the Newark area.

After a decade with Anheuser-Busch, Sarlo-Montalto returned to the pharmaceutical industry. She is currently senior director of corporate engineering and facilities management at Par Pharmaceutical in Spring Valley, New York. Par is a leading U.S. developer and manufacturer of generic pharmaceuticals, offering dozens of prescription products in a variety of formulations. Sarlo-Montalto says that her position at Par is especially exciting and fulfilling for someone with her professional background. Her responsibilities include overseeing all capital projects, such a new \$8 million laboratory, a multi-million-dollar packaging facility, and two multi-million-dollar research and development facilities. She is also responsible for regulatory qualification of processing and packaging equipment company-wide, and for preventive maintenance and calibration of all equipment and systems.

Although she has worked in industries as diverse as food and pharmaceuticals, Sarlo-Montalto emphasizes that there is a managerial and technical continuum. They are all process-based, and the common goal is to maintain the highest possible product quality while being as efficient and cost-effective as possible. To this end, one of Sarlo-Montalto's primary objectives at Par is to introduce more automation in the manufacture of pharmaceuticals. This is particularly challenging given the batch-production processes typical of the industry and the very stringent quality-control requirements that must be met. But Sarlo-Montalto is confident that automation can be judiciously applied to increase both product quality and competitiveness.

As extensive as her professional responsibilities have become, Sarlo-Montalto has made a comparable commitment to education at the high-school and university levels. She frequently speaks at area secondary schools to promote careers in science and technology and looks forward to greater involvement at NJIT as a trustee. When asked about what she thinks some special interests might be as a board member, she says that she would like to be an advocate for the co-op and intern programs at the university. "Integrating learning on campus with the broader world of the workplace benefits students and employers alike," she says. "Of course, I hope to see more co-ops and interns from NJIT at Par."