

**J. Daniel Dolan**  
**Research helps people  
where they live**

By Evan Epstein, Contributing writer



As a kid, he wanted to become a concert violist. But he sold his instrument to pay for college — something he still thinks of today.

Ultimately, **J. Daniel Dolan**, recipient of the Sahlin Faculty Excellence Award for Public Service, went into structural engineering, where his work affects nearly every citizen in the state and country.

“I don’t just do my research,” said Dolan. “I want to make sure my (and others’) research results come to fruition and have an impact on society.”

One facet of Dolan’s research aims to improve building codes and design standards to make low-rise buildings (defined as six stories or less) safer for the public. He does this in part through working on and chairing several technical subcommittees of the federal Building Seismic Safety Council.

“I started to look at the impact of housing and realized that the average American’s biggest investment is a home,” said Dolan. “I also realized that the best way to pull people out of poverty is home ownership. So, if you’re going to complain about poverty, then do something about it — make sure that people are buying a product that will last and survive.”

“Most homeowners expect their houses to survive snow, wind and even earthquakes,” said **Donald A. Bender**, professor of civil and environmental engineering. “Thanks to Dr. Dolan’s efforts, the buildings in which we live, work, shop, learn and worship will be safer.”

Dolan’s efforts include participating in Federal Emergency Management Agency reconnaissance efforts to evaluate damage from Hurricanes Andrew and Katrina, from which PBS developed the program, “Disaster Resistant Housing.” He also advises student teams from Engineers Without Borders on projects designing replacements for school buildings destroyed by the tsunami in Sri Lanka and replacing water supply systems in remote areas of the state’s Yakama nation.

Dolan feels that with added extension employees working for the university in engineering, WSU could address the mission of service even more — with a huge payout to the university in the end.

“You have to ask yourself: ‘What did we do for the people living in this state and how can we affect the average person’s life?’” said Dolan. “I hope people see that you can gain notoriety outside of publishing. Your findings can make a huge effect.”  
Now, about finding a viola for this selfless researcher...