# Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, Ph.D.

The Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering faculty have special interest and expertise in five thrust areas: continuum mechanics; power, propulsion, and environment; micro/nanomechanics; and systems and design.

Continuum mechanics faculty study the physics of fluids, physics and chemistry of solids, and structural mechanics. Areas of emphasis in fluid mechanics include incompressible and compressible turbulent flows, multiphase flows, chemically reacting and other nonequilibrium flows, aeroacoustics, aerooptics, and fluid-solid interaction. In the field of solid mechanics, research and course work emphasize theoretical and computational approaches which contribute to a basic understanding of and new insight into the properties and behavior of condensed matter. General areas of interest are large-strain and large-rotation inelastic solids, constitutive modeling, and fracture mechanics. Computational algorithms center on boundary element methods and the new class of meshless methods. Studies in structural mechanics involve the analysis and synthesis of low-mass structures, smart structures, and engineered materials, with emphasis on stiffness, stability, toughness, damage tolerance, longevity, optimal life-cycle costs and self-adaptivity.

Research in power, propulsion, and environment encompasses aerospace propulsion, combustion and thermophysics, fuel cell technologies, and atmospheric physics and impacts. In aerospace propulsion, particular emphasis is placed in the areas of turbomachinery, spray combustion, combustion instability, innovative engine cycles, and compressible turbulent mixing. The topic of combustion and thermophysics addresses the fundamental fluid-dynamical, heat-transfer, and chemical mechanisms governing combustion in diverse settings. Fuel cell research encompasses the development of fuel-cell technology, hybrid engines, and thermionic devices. Activities cover the thermodynamics of energy systems, the controls associated with advanced energy systems, and systems analyses. The area of atmospheric physics and impacts deals with the modeling and controlling of chemical pollution, particle dispersion, and noise emission caused by energy-generation and propulsion devices. Research on atmospheric turbulence addresses the energy exchanges between the Earth’s land and ocean surfaces and the overlying atmosphere. Micro/nanomechanics encompasses the thrusts of miniaturization engineering, mechatronics, and biotechnology. Miniaturization engineering is relevant to the development of small-scale mechanical, chemical and biological systems for applications in biotechnology, automotive, robotic, and alternative energy applications. It involves the establishment of scaling laws, manufacturing methods, materials options and modeling from the atom to the macrosystem. Mechatronic design is the integrated and optimal design of a mechanical system and its embedded control system. Main focus research is the design, modeling, and characterization of Micro Electro Mechanical Systems (MEMS). Particular emphasis is placed on analysis and design of algorithmic methods and physical systems that realize sensor-based motion planning. The thematic area of biotechnology involves the understanding, modeling, and application of fundamental phenomena in mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, and chemistry towards the development of bio-sensors and actuators.

Systems and design research is conducted in the areas of dynamic systems optimization and control, biomechanical engineering, robotics and machine learning, and design engineering. Advanced concepts in dynamics, optimization and control are applied to the areas of biorobotics, flight trajectory design, guidance and navigation, learning systems, micro sensors and actuators, flexible structures, combustion, fuel cells, and fluid-optical interactions.

Biomechanical engineering integrates physiology with engineering in order to develop innovative devices and algorithms for medical diagnosis and treatment. The focus of robotics and machine learning is the creation of machines with human-like intelligence capabilities for learning. Faculty in design engineering develop methodologies to address issues ranging from defining the size and shape of components needed for force and motion specifications, to characterizing performance in terms of design parameters, cost and complexity.

Aerospace engineering research efforts combine specialties from each of the five thrust areas toward the design, modeling, and operation of complex aerospace systems.

The doctoral program in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering is tailored to the individual needs and background of the student. The detailed program of study for each Ph.D. student is formulated in consultation with a faculty advisor who takes into consideration the objectives and preparation of the candidate.

Within this flexible framework the Department maintains specific guidelines that outline the milestones of a typical doctoral program. All doctoral students should consult the Departmental Ph.D. guidelines for program details, but there are several milestones to be passed: admission to the Ph.D. program by the faculty; completion of three non-research graduate, technical courses beyond M.S. degree requirements; passage of a preliminary examination or similar assessment of the student’s background and potential for success in the doctoral program; course work; meeting departmental teaching requirements, which can be satisfied through service as a teaching assistant or equivalent; research preparation; formal advancement to candidacy in the third year (second year for students who entered with a master’s degree) through a qualifying examination conducted on behalf of the Irvine division of the Academic Senate, which includes the development of a research proposal; completion of a significant research investigation, and completion and defense of an acceptable dissertation. There is no foreign language requirement. The degree is granted upon the recommendation of the Doctoral Committee and the Dean of Graduate Studies. Students enrolled in the Ph.D. program must take a full-time load (minimum of 12 units). The normative time for completion of the Ph.D. is five years (four years for students who entered with a master’s degree). The maximum time permitted is seven years. Before seeking admission, Ph.D. applicants are encouraged to communicate directly and in some detail with prospective faculty sponsors. The student’s objectives and financial resources must coincide with a faculty sponsor’s research interests and research support. Financial aid in the form of a teaching assistantship or fellowship may not cover the period of several years required to complete the program. During the balance of the period the student will be in close collaboration with the faculty research advisor.