

July 16, 2013

Professor Joao Hespanha Appointed New Chair of Electrical and Computer Engineering Department



João Hespanha



Jerry Gibson

Professor [João Hespanha](#) has been appointed chair of the UC Santa Barbara Department of [Electrical and Computer Engineering](#). His new post is effective July 1, 2013. Hespanha, who was most recently vice-chair of the department, replaces outgoing chair, Professor Jerry

Gibson, who has held the position since 2008.

As outgoing chair, [Professor Gibson](#) has been instrumental in several advances in the department, including an extensive redesign of the department's website; the establishment of ["The Current"](#), an annual ECE department newsletter; the appointment and organization of a new departmental industry advisory board with annual meetings; and the year-long ECE department 50th anniversary celebration with four distinguished lectures.

"My experience as chair is highlighted by the many, very positive interactions that I have had with faculty and staff," commented Gibson. "With their support, we have been able to get a number of things done."

Gibson's impact can also be seen and felt through the five new faculty members hired during his tenure. A particular challenge in recent years, said Gibson, was navigating the department through years of late State budgets, substantial departmental budget cuts, and staff furloughs.

"It was a difficult time for everyone," said Gibson, who credits the department's faculty and staff for getting things done. "My role in these efforts primarily has been as initiator and facilitator," he said.

Gibson turned to a comment by Roger Woods, ECE professor emeritus, for his advice to the incoming chair: "Roger said in an interview for our 2009 department newsletter when describing his service as Associate Dean, 'You respected the students, you respected the faculty, and you respected the needs of the institution.'"

Professor Hespanha brings his own list of impressive qualities to the position. Hespanha earned his PhD in electrical engineering and applied science from Yale University, and completed a stint as an assistant professor at the University of Southern California. He joined the faculty at UCSB in 2002. His current research interests include hybrid and switched systems; the modeling and control of communication networks; distributed control over communication networks; the use of vision in feedback control; and stochastic modeling in biology.

Hespanha is the recipient of several prestigious awards, including Yale's Henry Prentiss Bacon Graduate prize, a National Science Foundation CAREER award, the Ruberti Young Researcher Prize, and several awards for best or outstanding published papers.

Hespanha also currently serves as director for the [Center for Control, Dynamical Systems, and Computation](#) (CCDC), and is a member of the executive committee for the [Institute for Collaborative Biotechnologies](#) at UCSB. From 2004 to 2007 he was an associate editor for the IEEE Transactions on Automatic Control. [Hespanha is a Fellow of the IEEE and an IEEE distinguished lecturer since 2007.](#)

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