

# ADVISORY BOARD CHAIR



## **TOM LESTER**

*Dean of the College of Engineering  
at University of Kentucky,  
Chair of the Department of  
Mechanical Engineering at LSU,  
Professor of Nuclear Engineering at  
Kansas State University*

### **Why did you choose Purdue University?**

I grew up in Dayton, Ohio and decided early that I wanted to major in engineering, especially after I had the chance to meet a cardiac surgeon who had operated on my grandfather at the IU Medical Center in Indianapolis. He told me that he had earned an Electrical Engineering degree from Purdue University before heading to medical school, and suggested that Electrical Engineering or Mechanical Engineering offered the broadest career choices. Since I was not sure what kind of engineer I wanted to be, I followed his advice and chose Mechanical Engineering and due to his influence, I chose Purdue University over the Ohio State.

### **What ensembles did you participate in?**

I marched in the "All-American" Marching Band for four years, played snare drum in the Symphony Band for four years, and tenor saxophone in the Variety Band for four years.

### **What was your favorite experience or opportunity you had while in Purdue Bands & Orchestras?**

The Rose Bowl trip in December 1966/January 1967.

### **What do you attribute your success to?**

I was fortunate to have loving parents, who encouraged me to follow my dreams, outstanding teachers in high school, concerned and outstanding mentors among the Purdue Mechanical Engineering faculty especially, Professor Sigmar Witting, who would become my major professor for my Masters and Doctorate degrees and a life-long friend, and the opportunity to observe how Professor Al G. Wright orchestrated his staff, especially Maxine and Roy Johnson, to put on consistently high quality halftime shows and concerts through the years.

### **How has Purdue Bands & Orchestras impacted and shaped your life?**

The opportunity to be heavily involved with the Purdue Bands & Orchestras department as an instrumentalist and as Supply Officer taught me time management, interpersonal, and leadership skills. When I arrived at Purdue in the fall of 1966, I was very scared about my ability to succeed academically, but the close friendships I formed in the band and the support I received through those friendships helped to ease my transition from high school and enabled me to develop the confidence to succeed in engineering education at Purdue and in the engineering profession following my years in West Lafayette.

