Joe Healey’s life has been about creating more and better options—for himself, for investors, and for young people in a variety of educational settings. Now, with a gift to the College of Engineering, he has set in motion initiatives that may help shape future generations of engineers.

Nothing in his early life suggested that Healey (ENG’88) would one day put his personal stamp on engineering education. He grew up poor in Warwick, R.I., the son of a single-parent mom who worked as a nurse. Having received a rigorous education at Warwick’s Bishop Hendricken High School, he demonstrated his appreciation years later with the Healey Scholarship Program, providing four-year full tuition scholarships to two Hendricken students each year. "I had a great experience there," Healy says. "There are great kids there who are dirt poor, like I was, and who can only break out if they get the same kind of opportunity I got."

Healey attended BU on an ARMY ROTC scholarship. His interest in the then-exotic field of bioengineering brought him into contact with Ken Lutchen, a professor at the time, and now ENG dean, whose passion for his field Healey found contagious. Healey was impressed equally by an engineering economics course taught by Theo de Winter, an ENG associate professor. “It was my introduction to modern finance,” he says. “Cash flows, present value—the stuff I now do every day. Didn’t have much to do with engineering, but I loved it.”

After graduating, Healey joined the computer department of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., where he worked with doctors who had to link their complex medical technologies up with computers. This intensely practical technology education served him well when he went on to work as a portfolio manager with a specialty in health care at a series of New York–based investment firms. In 2005, he and a colleague launched the investment management firm HealthCor Group, today one of the largest health care and life sciences investment management firms in the United States, managing more than $3 billion in assets.

Despite his success in the financial sector, Healey has never forgotten his engineering roots. In 2010, he worked with Lutchen to set up the Joseph P. Healey Fund for Engineers in the Real World, designed to help BU students better understand their career options and to encourage high school students to consider an undergraduate engineering degree.

In addition to bringing engineers to campus, Healey’s fund helps support the Technology Innovation Scholars Program, which awards BU engineering undergraduates a stipend for inspiring secondary-school students to take science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) courses. (The National Academies of Science and the National Science Foundation have identified these subjects as key to competing in a global economy.) In December 2010, 59 ENG students applied for the program, and 17—with both strong academic records and communications skills—were named Technology Innovation Scholars. Their initial role was to mentor local high school teams competing in the national FIRST Robotics Competition, founded by Engineering Leadership Advisory Board member Dean Kamen (Hon.’06). In coming months, as “Inspiration Ambassadors,” they will share their enthusiasm for engineering with additional young people.

“These are only the first few steps along the much longer road that we’re contemplating,” says Lutchen, “but they are important steps. We’re putting some of our best and brightest students in front of high schoolers. We’re bringing high schoolers to our campus. And of course, we’re bringing very accomplished engineers here to broaden our own students’ horizons. And it’s Joe Healey’s vision and support that’s helping to make it all possible.”