Letter from the Editor

October 24, 2021

Dear IEC community,

I hope you are all having a productive Fall semester and looking forward to the holiday season, which oddly enough always seems to be slowly approaching at this time of the year.

For those of us who had been temporarily unplugged due to COVID ramifications, I am pleased to share that IEC has been growing. Our community is now composed of 20 sustaining members made up of 15 HBCUs, 3 HSIs and 2 TCUs. Please join me in welcoming participants from our newest member-schools: Navajo Technical University and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute. Their perspectives and contributions will be of great value to our organization as we continue to develop and implement initiatives to make ECE more inclusive.

As I had mentioned in the last issue, IEC's leadership, partners and members spent part of the past year trying to gain a better understanding of the interests and needs of the community, especially from the perspectives of faculty whose active engagement is critical to our continued success. To support these important stakeholders, IEC will continue to seek opportunities for capacity building partnerships, and large-scale joint proposals that can optimally involve most institutions. That is why, as a super-department, IEC is currently planning to submit proposals to respond to three NSF solicitations; namely, the INCLUDES Alliance, EHR Racial Equity in STEM Education, and CISE Broadening Participation in Computing Alliance. Therefore, we are actively soliciting interested faculty to reach out to **mklein@iec.org** for additional information and to participate in these opportunities. We hope to have at least one representative from each Member Institution join one of the Working Groups that have been formed to brainstorm ideas and develop these proposals. The UF@IEC AI-centered collaborative initiative is an illustrative example of our IEC's ongoing activities in capacity-building. Through this collaborative project with University of Florida, IEC members have access to the HiPerGator AI supercomputer and education materials from UF. We also envision the availability of mentorships to IEC students through REUs and professional development for IEC faculty via sabbatical leaves. Additional information on this initiative and others are available through the on-demand videos of the IEC Catalyst Workshop.

In his featured article of this issue, Corey Graves shares and discusses the perspectives, experiences and takeaways of NCAT students whose innovative idea and business pitch won the

2021 Moguls in the Making Competition. The institutional spotlight article showcases, inter alia, the programs and capabilities of the Department of Engineering and Aviation Sciences at UMES that offers the only professional pilot training program in the state of Maryland. In the ''Sister Nonprofits'' piece, we introduce the Black in Engineering (BIE) organization that seeks to tackle issues around implicit bias, systemic racism and racial injustice in engineering. We have shared links to many of their BIE-related videos and articles that could be of great value to your colleagues and students alike. In his "Thinking Outside the Box'' contribution, Ken Connor starts an interesting discussion with the recurring question *''What is the proper balance between research and teaching"* and points us to recommendations for strengthening the research-teaching nexus at the local level. He then directs us to an interesting paper whose review should elicit interesting questions and discussions on a topic that is particularly relevant in institutions that have historically focused on undergraduate education. In the professional development corner, we remind ourselves of general/basic rules of net etiquette.

I am very much looking forward to seeing everyone again virtually at EquiTECH 2022 (January 18 and 20, 2022), and then in-person at the 2022 IEC Academic Symposium in New Orleans (March 25-28, 2022). Let us then all mark our calendars. Finally, I would like to remind you to periodically check the website under programs to stay aware of the dates of our upcoming meetings.

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