April 29, 2021

Dear IEC Community,

 It is hard to believe that we have been going through the trials and tribulations of living under COVID for more than one year now. This pandemic has continually turned our lives upside down by forcibly changing the way we work, communicate with each other, teach, and perform various other tasks. According to Charles Spurgeon "Trials teach us what we are; they dig up the soil and let us see what we are made of". Well … for educators (and others), the soil has indeed been thoroughly dug up and we have uncovered that, at least when we must, we are resilient, innovative, and rapidly adaptable to changes. The unavoidable question is then how we might permanently cultivate these qualities and organize ourselves into more effective learning communities that greatly benefit the students they serve.

As IEC, I believe that we have already embarked on that path by frequently organizing relevant workshops, setting up workgroups on important pedagogical subjects and regularly exchanging news, ideas and lessons-learned through the IEC Exchange and the IEC Briefs, which are archived on the IEC webpage at https://www.iec.org/IEC-Resources. Since repetition is the key to effective communication, we should take this opportunity to remind ourselves that the success of this enterprise hinges very heavily on our collective participation and engagement. To that end, we encourage once again our fellow IEC members to join working groups and committees and participate more actively in workshops like the upcoming May 18th Anti-Racism Workshop that deals with a topic that is timely and extremely important to all of us. We also remind members to strive to occasionally contribute items to this newsletter by contributing articles, useful online resources, or photos of students/faculties from their institutions participating in interesting activities, projects, and competitions to showcase the vibrancy of our community of educators and learners.

In this issue, a spotlight on Virginia State University's Department of Engineering presents its programs, capabilities, initiatives and more. Feature articles include a discussion by Demetris Geddis on the successful Hampton University HBCU/HSI Capstone Design Project pilot program that was implemented in collaboration with iMasons that plans to leverage this success and sponsor similar projects at other IEC member institutions next year. This initiative provides mentorship to students, and senior design projects from industry and pathways to employment. Interested colleagues are encouraged to join the iMasons working group and use the provided links to the on-demand sessions from the Data-Center Curriculum Workshops to catch up on the discussions. Additionally, the iMasons website (https://imasons.org/) provides additional information and useful resources like the Diversity and Inclusion Best Practice Guide https://imasons.org/publications/di-best-practice-guide/ on how organizations, particularly those in the Digital Infrastructure space can attract and retain people from a diverse background and promote a culture of inclusion. This issue's "Thinking outside of the Box" piece provides two valuable web resources that would be very useful to those looking for ideas when developing courses.

Mandoye Ndoye
Associate Professor
Electrical and Computer Engineering Department
Tuskegee University