Faculty Awards, Honors and Heartwarming Altruism

While many of you were wrapping up your semesters with exams and papers and thesis defenses, some of our faculty have been winning awards and becoming members of elite organizations!

On Wednesday May 1, Rebecca Richards-Kortum and Maria Oden won the 2013 $100,000 Lemelson-MIT Award for Global Innovation. This is an extremely competitive award and we are very proud of Rebecca and Maria who won the award “in honor of their life-saving inventions and pioneering efforts to inspire and lead Rice students to invent and deliver low-cost technological innovations to improve health care for people in developing nations.” What’s really, really cool about this is that Rebecca and Maria are donating the prize money to the hospital they’ve been working with in Malawi to deploy low-cost technologies—designed by Rice engineers—to improve the healthcare of babies. You can read all about the award, watch some videos and find out how you can help through the crowd-sourcing website they’ve set up: [http://engr.rice.edu/lemelsonaward/](http://engr.rice.edu/lemelsonaward/).

I want to also recognize some of the behind-the-scenes folks who have worked hard to do what’s needed to get the word out and raise the additional money needed to reach the goal: Lauren Vestewig, executive director of Rice 360° and Matthew Wettergreen, lecturer in BIOE; from public affairs, Jade Boyd who spent a lot of time on the news release and Brandon Martin who made videos telling the story. And finally, Amy Kavalewitz, who spent many hours setting up the DayOne Project website and the crowdsourcing interface. Please join me in congratulating Rebecca and Maria on receiving this award and for using it to make the world a better place and in thanking these folks and many others who worked behind the scene!

While we’re thanking people, I’d like to give a well-deserved shout out to Linda Thrane and her public affairs staff who do so much all year long to promote the accomplishments of engineering faculty, students and staff. Thank you all for your support!

Congratulations to Naomi Halas, Stanley C. Moore Professor in Electrical and Computer Engineering, professor of biomedical engineering, chemistry and physics and astronomy and director of the Rice Quantum Institute and the Laboratory for Nanophotonics, who was elected last week to the prestigious National Academy of Sciences. This is an important milestone in Naomi’s career, which you can read about here: [http://engineering.rice.edu/Halas_NAS/](http://engineering.rice.edu/Halas_NAS/).

Innovating in the Classroom

Winners of the Brown Teaching Grants, which support innovative undergraduate teaching, have been announced and were awarded in engineering: John Dobelman, Renata Ramos, Ann Saterbak.
Dobelman, professor in the practice of STAT, Renata Ramos, lecturer in BIOE and Ann Saterbak, professor in the practice of BIOE. Anyone who has introduced true innovations in the courses they teach knows that this takes considerable effort. Congratulations to all of you and thank you for your great work and dedication to our students! You can read more about these awards here: http://engineering.rice.edu/Brown_Teaching_Grants/.

Pitch Perfect!

On Thursday, the Rice Undergraduate Venture Challenge, sponsored by RCEL and others, put nine teams of engineers in front of an audience of judges and each team had 8 minutes to pitch their product, followed by 4 minutes of taking the judges’ questions about their products and business plans. BioLink iNurse, with BIOE students Rahul Rekhi and Nathan Lo, and ECE students Fabio Ussher, Eric Palmgren and Abhijit Navlekar as members, took first place. You can read about the event and see who took the other awards here: http://engineering.rice.edu/venture_Challenge_2013/. Congratulations BioLink iNurse! Great job!

On the same day, the GSA Elevator Pitch Competition was held and engineers dominated with pitches and in taking away prizes. Hopefully, some of the grad students from other schools watched the competition and will be more inclined to join in next year. Taking first place was Mohammed Adnan of ChBE. There was a three-way tie for second place, with Shuzhen Ye of PHYS, Jon Brame of CEVE and Yu Jun Leong also of CEVE. You can find out who all the other winners were here: http://engineering.rice.edu/GSAelevatorpitch/.

Congratulations to Yildiz Bayazitoglu, the Harry S. Cameron Chair of Mechanical Engineering, who will be receiving the 2013 Michigan Engineering Alumni Association Society Award for Mechanical Engineering later this year. Yildiz earned her master’s and Ph.D. at Michigan. She is being recognized for her “outstanding career and life-long contributions to the field of mechanical Engineering. Good work, Yildiz!

Service Awards for May

Congratulations to Edward Woodward, senior developer and development manager in ECE, who joined the Rice staff five years ago. Keith Cooper, John and Ann Doerr Chair in Computational Engineering, professor of computer science, wearer of Hawaiian shirts and for about the past year, associate dean for research, has been here a bit longer than five years. He joined the Rice faculty thirty years ago this month. Congratulations, Keith, and thank you for your service to the School of Engineering and to Rice. You can read about Keith’s time at Rice here: http://engr.rice.edu/keithcooper/.
Movin’ on Up! Congratulations to Adam Ekenseair, postdoc researcher in the lab of Tony Mikos in BIOE. Adam has just landed a faculty job at Northeastern University. He’ll be joining them as an assistant professor. Good luck to you in your new position!

Racking Up the Honors! Sumedh Warudkar, ChBE grad student is continuing to win awards as he steps onto the stage to get his Ph.D.! He is winner of the 2013 Commencement Speaker Award so he will be meeting Neil deGrasse Tyson at a reception at President Leebron’s house. Congratulations, Sumedh!

REA SF Bay Area Meeting – May 20
The engineering alumni (12,000 strong!) have been working hard at setting up local REA clubs around the country. They’ll be hosting a meeting in the Bay Area to get folks there organized into a local REA group. Besides Houston, there are now groups in Austin and Dallas-Fort Worth and plans are in the works for more area groups. If you’re in the San Francisco Bay Area on May 20, you’re invited to attend. Sign up at https://online.alumni.rice.edu/default.aspx?Page=EVNTEventDetail&EventID=1660.

Happy Trails, Graduates!
Graduation reception on Friday from 4-6:30. All graduating engineers and their families are invited. There will be a poster session featuring very cool capstone design projects— and plenty of refreshments!

In closing, I want to wish all our graduating students the very best of luck. I hope you’re going on to exciting new jobs or places or the graduate program of your choice. Remember to be an effective engineer. Keep in touch and spread the good word about Rice Engineering!

For the rest of you: Have a good summer. Work hard but take some time to play. Learn lots of new things, be safe and send short nuggets/photos to Ann Lugg (alugg@rice.edu) about your engineering experiences, we’ll run some of the best in the fall Dean’s Messages. See you in the fall!

Dean Ned

Edwin L. Thomas
William and Stephanie Sick Dean of Engineering