

# Message from the Dean



E N G I N E E R I N G   A T   I L L I N O I S

March 17, 2008

Dear Colleagues,

As we look ahead to the future of Engineering at Illinois, we must also pause to take stock of where we are and from where we came. I wanted to share with you some of the salient elements of the recently completed 2008 Annual Report for the College of Engineering that was submitted to the Provost.

The report shows clearly that our faculty members are maintaining excellence in traditional areas of academic interest while also adapting to the changing focus in new fields of endeavor.

National and international recognitions continue to showcase Engineering at Illinois among the finest institutions:

- Ranked 5th in both undergraduate and graduate programs nationally by *U.S. News and World Report*.
- Ranked 3rd in engineering/technology and computer science by Academic Ranking of World Universities.
- Our faculty continues to receive prestigious awards in research, teaching, and service.

To maintain this leadership, we must fully support ongoing efforts while pursuing strategic goals that will build on our existing strengths and grow new avenues for the pursuit of engineering education and research excellence. As I have mentioned in earlier newsletters, the five most important of these goals are:

**Bioengineering and Engineering Departments** – Strong academic departments have been the core of this college's excellence, and maintaining this strength is essential to our continued success. We see a strong bioengineering department as vital to leveraging faculty strengths across all of our departments, and to establishing engineering's leadership in the campus-wide Translational Health Initiative and the Integrated Sciences for Health Initiative.

**Interdisciplinary Research** – Interdisciplinary activity has risen by 22% from FY 2006 to FY 2007, signaling our faculty's increasing participation and leadership in major efforts spanning academic disciplines. In addition, we are working hard to engage with industry. It is essential that new institutes and centers be established in ways that will strengthen and enhance their impact on academic units. A strong tradition of collaboration between institutes, centers, and departments must be fostered anew across the college.

**Increase Diversity of Students and Faculty** – The college has established short-, mid-, and long-term metrics and goals in this area. It is interesting to note that, while our overall percentages of underrepresented groups are below the national averages, we are competitive in several areas for absolute numbers. These metrics not only provide current benchmarks, but they also illustrate where additional efforts are needed.

We are implementing new programs to improve retention and graduation rates for our students. A summer academic preparation program—Illinois Connections in Engineering (ICE), piloted in 2007—is demonstrating dramatic academic performance improvements among participating freshmen, predominantly from underrepresented groups. The ICE program will be expanded this year.

**Transform Undergraduate Engineering Education** – An education subcommittee has examined several critical transformation issues that will position Engineering at Illinois for leadership in defining

what engineering education will look like in the future. As we study the recommendations and consult with various stakeholders, significant and practical program improvements are under way, including an innovative virtual bioimaging laboratory, enhanced classroom interactivity, new online tools, and curriculum reform.

**Strategic Partnerships with Industry and Other Institutions** – Engagement with industry is a critical area that requires our focused attention, now and in the coming years. In addition, we are strengthening our efforts on the global stage to ensure the Illinois brand is recognized and represented around the world.

Building from a strong tradition of excellence, academic strength, and world-class facilities, the college is looking to optimize activity, so that we are better positioned to seize opportunities and leadership in such areas as biosciences, information technology, energy, and civil infrastructure. Four subcommittees are exploring high priority issues that may affect the college's competitive position: delivery of non-core administrative services; faculty size and startup; space management; and external research funding. Their reports are due later this month and will provide valuable input towards fulfilling our mission.

By keeping our collective consciousness focused on these primary goals and applying our resources to their highest use, we can all contribute to engineering excellence and a brighter future.

Sincerely,  
Ilesanmi Adesida  
Dean and Willett Professor