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Editorial

The papers of this issue address various topics in engineering education including: Soft Skills, Entrepreneurial Skills, Graduate Program, Academic Performance, Gender, Educational Technologies, Role Identity, Women, First Year Students, Leaning Environment, Problem Solving, STEM, Big Data, Innovation, Active Learning, Design Process, Leadership, PBL, Student Outcomes, Conceptual Questions, Learning Style, Persistence, Software Engineering, Analog Circuits, Architecture Engineering, Mechanics, Robotics, Digital Circuits, and Aerospace Engineering.

The contributions are by authors from numerous countries including: USA, Spain, Israel, Brazil, Turkey, China, Portugal, Serbia, Canada, Lithuania, and Slovenia.

I hope the readers find the issue interesting and useful and I wish to thank all the authors for their valuable contributions.

In March of this year news broke about possibly fifty persons involved in schemes leading to fraudulent admission of students to reputable universities in the USA. They employed varied methods including claiming athletic abilities that did not exist or submitting exam papers completed by others. The schemes impacted at least eight universities that pride themselves on being of high academic reputation. Fortunately, no engineering school was directly impacted. However, the problem should still be of concern to engineering educators.

The universities in question distanced themselves from the situation and announced that they took actions in response to the exposed admission practices, including, for example: a promise to carry out investigations, punishing some people, announcing plans to use any money gained in connection with the alleged scheme to fund scholarships for underprivileged students or studying the best ways to use it and introduce changes to admission oversight. Let us hope that these measures are sufficient and that the proposed investigations would explore other possible backdoors to admission and academic degrees or honors bestowed on individuals motivated by financial reasons. For an investigation to be useful and comprehensive it should include an approach to international academic businesses and franchises as well.

In relation to the investigation, it should be questioned how athletic ability could lead to admission with relaxed academic requirements. It would be good to know how an academically less qualified person (whether athletic or not) passes the coursework and graduates with a degree from the university. Is the disclosed fraudulent scheme just one aspect of the phenomenon of degree inflation that would eventually lead to degree bubble bursting? We must worry that engineering schools might not be immune from inflation and disreputable practices.

On a positive note, it seems that the situation indicates that, even now, education continues to have an envied intrinsic value. Wealthy individuals with limited academic capacity find wealth is not good enough and want to pretend to have education through acquiring a prestigious academic status. Although most probably they are not seeking employment based on their university degrees, they remain interested in possessing a degree from a reputable university.

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