

Editorial

Recently, I attended the Harvey-Mudd design workshop at Claremont College in California. The experience was enlightening as far as how engineering education meetings should be organized and focused. This bi-annual meeting, broadly concerned with engineering design education is a concentrated, participatory, highly professional and personal event. The participants are prime actors in the engineering design and education fields. Many of them repeat attendees. The number of participants is kept to around 50 and the venue is a modern design studio with attendants sitting in groups of 4–5 around tables. Presentations are held to around 10 minutes with ample time of 20 and more minutes left for discussions and comments. The motor behind this series of conferences is Clive Dym who is well respected in the design education field.

The reason why I am bringing this up is because I have always thought that this is the way engineering education meetings should be held. One of the perturbations in accepting engineering education as a research area to be reckoned with is the jamboree character of many engineering education conferences. They often are conglomerations of unrelated expositions of only limited interest to the majority of attending engineering educators. These meetings lack focus and real peer assessment. While such meetings have a certain functional value, especially for young academics, they have little leverage in forming attitudes towards engineering education. My plea is for more focused meetings with experts discussing their own areas of expertise among peers, as is the case in many professional meetings in engineering and science. Such focused meetings can do a lot more than is presently done to further engineering education as a ‘multidisciplinary discipline’ and a recognized area of research and development.

IJEE is contributing to this focused view by publishing special issues on specific topics, concentrating on selected aspects of engineering education research and practice. We will continue to publish these. We are also looking forward to publish the papers from this year’s Harvey-Mudd meeting.

In the current issue we publish the first of two issues focusing on mobile technologies in engineering education. These technologies are fast becoming popular in many countries. Interestingly, also in those countries where engineering education is a relatively recent area of thrust. It is the prevalence of laptops, wireless connectivity, PDA’s and mobile phones, which have penetrated all areas of the globe faster than the more sluggish development of engineering education facilities which are accelerating this process.

I am most grateful to K. K. Tan who proposed the topic, and Ahmad Ibrahim both experienced special issue guest editors for selecting so many relevant papers for this very current topic. Very timely.

Michael Wald