July 11, 2016

Dear members of the Hajim School community:

Thank you so much for the **many supportive messages I have received** since being named dean. I am honored to have this opportunity to work with all of you — faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends — as we **continue to make the Hajim School ever better**. This school has meant a great deal to me; this is where I began my professional career 15 years ago, fresh out of MIT, as an assistant professor of electrical and computer engineering. It is a real plus to already know and respect so many of the people I will be working with!

So far I have met with members of the senior leadership team and our department chairs. I will continue to meet with and gather input from Hajim School and University leaders throughout the summer. **By fall I will be sharing my ideas with all of you, and welcoming your feedback.** We have lots of exciting work ahead of us!

In the meantime, congratulations to:

**Thomas Howard**, assistant professor of electrical and computer engineering, and **Jacob Arkin** in his lab for a **Best Paper Award** at the Robotics Science and Systems conference at the University of Michigan last month, along with MIT collaborators Rohan Paul and Nicholas Roy. They introduced a **probabilistic model that allows a robot to understand natural language instructions** in the context of its world representation. Their work demonstrates "accurate grounding of abstract concepts embedded in complex natural language instructions commanding a robot manipulator."

**Riccardo Betti**, the Robert L. McCrory Professor at the Laboratory for Laser Energetics and professor of mechanical engineering, and LLE scientist and adjunct professor **Jonathan Davies** have received a $700,000 grant from the Department of Energy to **double the magnetic field of LLE’s Magneto-Inertial Fusion Electrical Discharge System** to 30 Tesla, to better study the effects of intense magnetic fields on laser produced plasmas. Applications include reproducing astrophysical environments, such as plasma jets and collisionless shocks; collimating energetic particles produced by lasers (such as positrons and electrons); and also improving the conditions for inertial confinement fusion. Another $150,000 grant with LLE scientist and adjunct assistant professor **Andrei Maximov** will support a PhD student to **simulate magnetized laser-produced plasmas** in experiments at the **Nevada Terawatt Facility** at the University of Reno.

**Douglas Kelley**, assistant professor of mechanical engineering, has **received a University Furth Fund Award**, designed to fund the research of promising early career scientists. Doug **researches the space- and time-dynamics of fluid flows and the materials being mixed in them**, with a variety of applications.

Asst. Prof. **Hitomi Mukaibo and her lab in chemical engineering** have an article in **Renewable Energy Global Innovations** describing a relatively **simple method for separating reusable microalgae and magnetite nanoparticles** from the biomass that remains after production of biofuel and other products. Read more **here**.
Ehsan Hoque, assistant professor of computer science, and students Ru Zhao ’17, Vivian Li ’18, Bilal Moiz ’16, Zoe Tiet ’17, and Tergel Purevdorj ’16 were featured recently at Microsoft’s Research Blog for their work on the RocSpeak platform. The platform provides automated feedback to help people become better speakers by analyzing the words they use, the loudness and pitch of their voice, their body language, and when and how often they smile. Read more here.

Jeremy Hassett ’16 of audio and music engineering has been named to the CoSIDA Academic All-America Men’s Cross Country/Track and Field Team after voting by members of the College Sports Information Directors of America. Hassett, a Second Team selection, graduated with a GPA of 3.98 and won seven New York State championships over a four-year career in four outdoor and three indoor middle distance events. Read more here.

Our Baja SAE team put on a strong performance, finishing 27th out of the 100 off-road vehicles entered by various U.S. and foreign universities in the endurance race at Hogback Hill in Palmyra last month. Kevin Bonko, team president, said the team was in 18th place at one point before blowing two tires.

Your dean,
Wendi Heinzelman