Dear members of the Hajim School community:

It was great to see the strong turnout of students and companies at our first Engineering Career Expo last week, held in the Frederick Douglass Ballroom in conjunction with a Corporate Career Expo. Thirty-nine of the 59 employers on hand were registered for the engineering expo; a total of 675 students attended. This shows that companies are eager to recruit our students. It was especially rewarding to see some of our recent graduates representing the companies.

Hesam Askari, assistant professor of mechanical engineering, has codeveloped with his mentor at MIT a “simple and elegant” theoretical model, recently published in Nature Materials, to quickly calculate the force required to move objects over or through whole classes of previously untested granular materials in a variety of settings. Applications could range from designing vehicles to traverse granular terrains on distant planets, for example, to understanding how lizards “swim” through sand here on earth -- even to targeting the delivery of drugs through particle-filled tissues in the human body. Hesam is excited about the opportunity this presents for involving a community of faculty and students in MechE and other departments at the University, such as physics and biomedical engineering, in a research narrative revolving around mechanics and rheology (flow) of particulate systems. Read more here.

Danielle Benoit, associate professor of biomedical engineering, is co-PI on an NIH grant led by Associate Professor Catherine Ovitt in biomedical genetics to better understand the mechanisms of radiation-damage induced loss of salivary gland function during treatment for head and neck cancers, and to develop possible therapies against damage. This could greatly improve the quality of life for survivors of these cancers.

Congratulations as well to Christopher Farrar, a BME PhD candidate in Associate Professor Denise Hocking's lab. Chris has been awarded a Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award Individual Predoctoral Fellowship (F31) from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute for his project, “Influence of extracellular matrix fibronectin on platelet derived growth factor (PDGF) signaling.” You can read more about his project here.

About 100 Institute of Optics students, faculty members, and staff couldn't have asked for better conditions Saturday before last for their inaugural Optics 5K Fun Run/Walk along a course that wound its way through the campus and Genesee Valley Park, crossing the Genesee River and its tributaries five times. Overall first place was taken by Erich Spaker ’20 with a time of 19:09. Jonathan Ellis, assistant professor of optics and mechanical engineering, took first place for faculty and staff. Rodrigo Gutierrez was the fastest grad student, and Erin Sumfleth ’20 finished first among females. Thanks to Kari Brick, graduate program coordinator, and Dan Smith, undergraduate program manager, for organizing this community building event, and to all the student volunteers who manned the water tables and served as timers and course marshals.

Jay Last, who received his BS in optics here in 1951, was an early leader in the development
of semiconductors, and part of the first generation of Westerners to devote serious attention to Africa's visual art traditions. Click here to read his Rochester Review interview with Peter Lennie, the Robert L. and Mary L. Sproull Dean of Faculty in AS&E, in which Last comments on his education at Rochester, the connections between optics and art, and science's relationship to the humanities.

Don't forget: Help us celebrate the dedication of the new Edmund A. Hajim Science & Engineering Quad on Friday. We're handing out cool t-shirts that students, faculty members, and staff can wear to the event to show our pride — and to demonstrate our appreciation to Ed Hajim. You can pick up your free t-shirt in Wilson Commons between 3 and 6 p.m. on Thursday. The dedication at 11:30 a.m. Friday will be followed by a barbecue on the quad — open to all — and music by Don't Know Jack, a band that includes Rob Clark, our former dean, now provost. Click here for the full schedule of Meliora Weekend events.

Have a great week, and enjoy Meliora Weekend!

Your dean,
Wendi Heinzelman