October 17, 2016

Dear members of the Hajim School community:

The Optical Society’s 100th annual meeting, FiO 2016, which convenes in Rochester today, will showcase more than 60 projects and presentations by researchers from The Institute of Optics and other departments. For example, Associate Professor Miguel Alonso and Professor Thomas Brown of The Institute will present a relatively simple, inexpensive way to measure the polarization states of each of several beams emitted by multicore optical fibers, making it easier to produce next-generation endoscopes to diagnose cancer and high-power laser amplifiers for communications. You can read more here about their project, the conference, and the ties that bind Rochester, the Optical Society, and The Institute of Optics.

A special thanks to Optimax Systems Inc., one of the member companies of The Institute of Optics Industrial Associates Program, for a generous $100,000 gift. Announced at last week's IA meeting here, the gift will support the Optimax Systems Fabrication Lab in the Hopkins Center for Optical Design and Engineering in Goergen Hall. Rick Plympton, Optimax CEO and Institute alumnus, says the company is delighted to support optics education at The Institute, where students “have a unique opportunity to learn about optics and photonics from some of the best and brightest minds in the world” and also to “become friends with others who have great potential. When you complete your degree you become a member of the Institute alumni family.” This is a great example of how the IA program increases the Institute’s ability to educate students to assume key roles in the optics industry. The IA program also provides training to industry partners, and provides networking opportunities between industry partners and current students.

Some exciting research in the Hajim School takes place in the Robotics and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory of Thomas Howard, assistant professor of electrical and computer engineering and of computer science. Check out this video as Jake Arkin, a PhD student in the lab, demonstrates a natural language model for training a robot to complete a particular task. The model allows a user to speak a simple command, which the robot can translate into an action. This research was a joint effort with Rohan Paul and Nicholas Roy from MIT.

Attention all Hajim School students interested in studying abroad: Be sure to attend the annual Global Fair a week from Friday, from 1 to 4 p.m. Oct. 28 in Douglass Commons and the Meliora Grand Ballroom. All University education abroad programs, as well as other semester, year, and summer international opportunities will be represented. Representatives from the Financial Aid Office will advise students and a travel agent will provide information about transportation and International Student ID Cards. University students who have already studied abroad will share tips and experiences. Read more here.

Did you ever wonder why there’s a smiling face of a pig on that pink nitrogen tank behind Wilmot Annex? Thanks to Victoria Seremetis ’19, a contributing writer to the Campus Times, we have an answer: The pig was painted by research students of former Institute of Optics professor Turan Erdogan’s Periodic Index Grating (PIG) group, who regarded the pig gas tank as their “mascot.” Read more here about Victoria’s intrepid pursuit of this story, and the “friendly” and “efficient” professors she met along the way.
And on that note, I wish you all a great week!

Your dean,
Wendi Heinzelman