Grainger Illinois at ASEE 2019

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The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was well represented at the 2019 American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE) conference. This year, 27 faculty members from The Grainger College of Engineering were in attendance and presented 51 papers, addressing topics such as curricular reform, teaching problem-solving strategies, assessment practices, and writing in an engineering context.

At the conference, Craig Zilles, Dave Mussulman, Geoffrey Herman, and other faculty and staff in attendance supported a Grainger Illinois booth to promote the engineering education innovation that Grainger Engineering fosters. This booth attracted individuals looking for faculty positions in an engineering college, compared to other booths that focused on recruiting prospective graduate students to their education-based graduate programs. Additionally, the booth showcased The Academy for Excellence in Engineering Education’s (AE3) programs, including the Strategic Instructional Innovations Program, which provides education-innovation grants to faculty members.

Another highlight of the conference went to Geoffrey Herman, who was awarded the “Star Reviewer” award from the Education Research and Methods Division (ERM).
Upon returning from the conference, Grainger Engineering faculty organized a collaborative conference debrief and brainstorming session to address how AE3 can continue to promote engineering education innovation within the college and ways to increase Grainger Engineering’s representation and impact at the 2020 ASEE conference. Members who participated in ASEE expressed that AE3 has provided a unique collaborative environment, as each individual has an appointment within a different department providing a multitude of perspectives and experiences, compared to appointments within a unified engineering education department.

While all participants had individual learnings from the conference, two themes emerged from the collaboration and brainstorming session: increasing engineering education research and awareness and encouraging accessibility innovation in a course-design context. Attendees expressed how ASEE promoted the exploration of new research areas to integrate into their current and future work. In addition, they hope to share their experiences with their colleges with the intention of helping them match their work with topics within ASEE to bring more awareness to engineering education innovation. The conference also provided an environment for individuals new to education research to familiarize themselves with the differences in methodology for this type of research, compared to that of technical research.

Many faculty members noted that ASEE inspired them to develop approaches to help their colleges take steps to increase the measures taken to ensure that courses that are taught are designed to be accessible to all students. One participant recounted their experience attending a technical lecture in American Sign Language, with a spoken English interpreter to demonstrate the challenges of delayed interpretation and the substitution of simple words to complex technical terms.

In summary, the 2019 ASEE Conference provided Grainger Engineering’s faculty and staff ample opportunity to not only present their research to the broader engineering education community, but also enabled them to learn new approaches from others to help advance engineering education research within the college. This strong participation and excitement for collaboration exemplifies the broad-based and deep dedication of faculty and staff within The Grainger College of Engineering to innovation in engineering education.