



INDUSTRIAL AND SYSTEMS ENGINEERING NEWSLETTER

Fall 2026



Dear friends of Auburn ISE,

It is an honor to begin serving as chair of the Auburn University Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering. I am excited about the future of our department and the opportunities ahead for our students, faculty and staff.

First, I want to recognize and thank Dr. Greg Harris for his leadership as department chair. Greg guided ISE through a period of significant growth and change, helping position the department for continued success. I am grateful for his leadership and look forward to building on the strong foundation he established.

We are beginning the academic year with exciting additions to our faculty and staff. [Haifeng Wang](#) has joined us as an associate professor and has already begun teaching. His expertise in artificial intelligence, machine learning and data-driven modeling will strengthen our research and educational programs. Myungeun Eom has also joined the department as an assistant professor after earning her doctorate from the Georgia Institute of Technology, where she specialized in operations research. We also welcomed [Eric Avant](#) as a new student services coordinator to support our students and programs.

I would like to highlight the exciting work of our assistant professors. Missie Smith received an [NSF CAREER Award](#) for her human-centered augmented reality research. Casey Eaton received an NSF grant to study how students learn to formulate engineering problems in the era of generative AI. Christian Zamiela continues to advance research in digital manufacturing, model-based engineering and explainable AI, while mentoring graduate students presenting their work at national and international conferences. Rongxuan Wang and his AMICS Lab team were awarded \$144,000 in beam line access at Oak Ridge National Laboratory to study residual stress in additive manufacturing and develop AI-assisted sensing methods. Allison Ledford recently helped plan and teach a course in the Army Aviation Digital Engineering Training Program in Huntsville. Finally, I am pleased to announce that Missie Smith and Yadrianna Acosta-Sojo have taken on leadership of the [Human Systems Integration Center](#). Dr. Acosta-Sojo serves as director of the Occupational Safety & Ergonomics program, while Dr. Smith directs the Occupational Injury Prevention program.

As I [begin my tenure as chair](#), I look forward to working alongside our faculty and staff to advance our mission. We will remain focused on providing an outstanding education, supporting impactful research and strengthening our connections with industry and alumni.

There is tremendous momentum within Auburn ISE, and I look forward to sharing our progress

[Subscribe](#) to our email list.

War Eagle,

Mark Schall

Chair, Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering



Auburn hosts international educators for Material Handling Teachers Institute

Faculty members from more than 30 universities and seven countries recently gathered at Auburn University for the Material Handling Teachers Institute (MHTI), a biennial professional

development event designed to strengthen education in logistics, supply chain management and material handling.

Hosted July 28-30 by Auburn's Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, the institute brought together approximately 40 faculty participants and 10 speakers for educational sessions, laboratory demonstrations, industry and field visits and opportunities to exchange teaching practices and research ideas.

The institute is organized by the College Industry Council on Material Handling Education (CICMHE), an organization founded in 1952 and affiliated with Material Handling Industry (MHI), the trade association for the material handling, logistics and supply chain industries. CICMHE brings together academia and industry to advance education, research and workforce development.



Three Auburn Engineering faculty members named Ginn Faculty Achievement Fellows

Three Auburn Engineering junior faculty members, Cassandra Porter, Missie Smith and Ali Khosravi, were named Ginn Faculty Achievement Fellows, effective August 17.

The Ginn Faculty Achievement Fellowship recognizes and rewards junior faculty in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering who receive prestigious young investigator awards, including the National Science Foundation (NSF) CAREER, Department of War, Department of Energy or National Institutes of Health.

Smith, assistant professor in the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, earned a five-year, \$599,999 NSF CAREER Award in June for research examining how augmented reality interfaces affect human decision-making, perception and performance. Her project will develop the "Visual Integration Framework" to help researchers and engineers better understand how different augmented reality formats influence attention, workload and human behavior.



Auburn Engineering launches educational partnership with Torch Technologies

The Samuel Ginn College of Engineering has established a new educational partnership with Torch Technologies, Inc., one of the nation's largest defense contractors, creating expanded opportunities for employees to pursue graduate engineering education while continuing their careers.

The partnership was formalized through a memorandum of understanding signed by Alicia Harkless, director of Auburn Engineering Online and Continuing Education, and Kenneth Lones, Torch vice president of corporate administration.

Under the agreement, qualified Torch employees may enroll in any graduate degree program offered online through Auburn Engineering and receive a 10% tuition discount. The partnership is designed to support workforce development by providing flexible pathways for working professionals to advance their education and technical expertise.

Since launching its first corporate educational partnership in 2020, Auburn Engineering has expanded its cohort program to include numerous industry partners across Alabama and beyond. The program allows employers to invest in employee development while helping working professionals earn graduate credentials without interrupting their careers.



ISE's inaugural international Lean Six Sigma program gives students global, real-world experience

Auburn University engineering and business students returned from

Germany this summer with more than an internationally recognized Lean Six Sigma Green Belt certification. They returned with firsthand experience solving real manufacturing challenges alongside global industry professionals.

The inaugural International Lean Six Sigma Green Belt Certification Program partnered Auburn with the Technical University of Applied Sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt (THWS) and Schaeffler, a global automotive and industrial supplier headquartered in Schweinfurt, Germany. During the three-week program, students completed Lean Systems coursework before traveling abroad to study Six Sigma methodologies and apply those principles to improvement projects inside Schaeffler's manufacturing facility.

For Tom Devall, professor and director of automotive manufacturing initiatives in Auburn's Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, the program exceeded expectations.

"We knew the experience would be positive and memorable, but what ultimately measured its success was the quality of the students' projects," Devall said. "Both the students and advisors rose to the occasion, and the quality of the projects was exceptional."



ICAMS mechatronics program opens pathway for Auburn graduate

When Zachary Huber arrived at Auburn University, his academic path centered on business. Four years later, a unique opportunity through the Interdisciplinary Center for Advanced Manufacturing

manufacturing, technology and product innovation.

Huber graduated in May with a degree in business administration, along with minors in Business Engineering Technology and Entrepreneurship and Family Business. This fall, he will continue his education at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), where he received a merit scholarship and was selected as the sole recipient of the Irene and Robert P. Bozzone '55 Fellowship in Management and Technology.

The fellowship provides financial support to an MBA student with an interest and aptitude in manufacturing and technology.



Six Auburn researchers recognized as trailblazing women in tech

Auburn University researchers are being honored for breakthroughs and leadership spanning aerospace, agriculture, advanced manufacturing, water quality and human-computer interaction in Business Alabama's Women in Tech 2026 list.

The annual list highlights women who are driving innovation, advancing research and shaping the future of technology across Alabama.

“Auburn University scientists are moving the needle in finding innovative solutions through their research while guiding emerging scholars who will use technology to tackle problems of the future,” said Jennifer Kerpelman, associate vice president for research. “We applaud these trailblazing women for their leadership, commitment and technical ingenuity.”

The Auburn honorees include:

Casey Eaton, assistant professor of industrial and systems engineering, recognized for her work on complex systems design and STEM outreach through Alabama Girls in Science and Engineering Day. Her NASA-funded research has received the Systems Engineering Research Consortium Barry Boehm Award and is the recipient of the Wiley Systems Engineering journal's Top Cited Article award.

Missie Smith, assistant professor of industrial and systems engineering, honored for research examining how people interact with emerging technologies and process information. Smith is internationally known for her studies of human factors in the use of immersive technologies and has mentored over 160 early-career researchers.



Auburn ISE doctoral student earns simulation fellowship

Rupesh Shrestha, a doctoral student in Auburn University's Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, has been awarded the 2026 Chapman Foundation Simulation Fellowship for his research and academic achievements in simulation and advanced manufacturing systems.

Shrestha earned his bachelor's degree in industrial engineering from Tribhuvan University and is currently pursuing a doctorate in industrial and systems engineering at Auburn University. His research focuses on digital twins, simulation, scheduling and multi-robot coordination for manufacturing and intralogistics applications.

"I decided to pursue a doctorate in industrial and systems engineering because I was interested in solving complex problems related to automation, digital twin development, scheduling and intralogistics systems," Shrestha said. "I was particularly drawn to how simulation, optimization and systems thinking can be combined to improve the performance of interconnected autonomous systems."



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