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GREETINGS FROM NORTHWESTERN ENGINEERING

The halls of Tech once again came to life this fall, as our students, faculty, and staff returned to campus. It has been a most welcome change. Though everyone has been incredibly resilient during the pandemic—our faculty and staff worked hard to continue our missions of education and research, and our students adapted remarkably quickly to online education—it is a morale booster to gather together again.

Many of our best ideas and collaborations are unplanned—a chance meeting in a hallway, in a classroom, or an offhand conversation at an event. These loose connections are difficult to replicate virtually. In an academic culture that thrives on ideas connecting with other ideas, connections like this often grow into full-fledged networks. Though we remain diligent in our safety measures, I look forward to seeing what our renewed in-person connections create this year.

Collaborations have been a hallmark of Northwestern Engineering for years, and in this issue, you will find stories that reveal the results of those connections. Our longstanding collaboration with the Field Museum, for example, has revealed new insights about lunar soil and led to a new paleobiology game for children. Our connection with the School of Communication has helped bring artistic thinking to computer science students, and teamwork among student groups has helped round out an engineering education, teaching students skills that they will use throughout their lives.

Our faculty are thriving. Professors in the Department of Industrial Engineering and Management Sciences, a field deeply grounded in optimization, have found success leading machine learning. Several other faculty members are leading the way in their fields—Hani Mahmassani in transportation and Ed Colgate in robotics and haptics—while Guillermo Ameer is celebrating the release of a new medical device that incorporates 20 years of work in biomaterials.

We have learned a lot over the past two years, including the importance of celebrating our accomplishments, big and small, in the face of difficult times. I celebrate our ongoing perseverance and our recent re-convergence, and I look forward to a future full of hope and opportunity.

As always, I welcome your feedback.

JULIO M. OTTINO
Dean, McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science

On the Cover Students celebrate a return to campus at “An Afternoon with McCormick” on September 17. Photography by Matthew Allen

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