

"I am continually inspired by the energy students bring to our halls, and when I meet with alumni, I see how that energy endures. It is an honor to be a part of this network of innovators and problem-solvers—people who never stop wanting to help."

GREETINGS FROM NORTHWESTERN ENGINEERING

Ask any of our students why they chose engineering, and you might hear, "I wanted to help people." For many engineers—even those who transition to careers in other fields—using their distinctive abilities to benefit society remains a lodestar throughout their lives.

So, this issue is devoted to how our students and faculty use their engineering expertise to improve the lives of others. Our cover feature focuses on professors who are developing technology to help individuals better engage with their world: AI and imaging tools to help people see, innovative cochlear implants to help them hear, and new technologies to help them walk or navigate a wheelchair. This is the kind of research that shows the real power of engineering to directly improve people's lives.

This instinct to help shows up in how we teach as well. You have no doubt read about the ongoing conversations around AI, particularly its use in the classroom. When used under the careful direction and control of the professor, AI can be a tool that improves education. That's the goal with the Socratic tester developed by Ilya Mikhelson, Charles Deering McCormick Distinguished Professor of Instruction. His new testing platform uses AI to allow professors the feasibility of turning their exams into a one-on-one conversation with each student. With this testing platform, students have more freedom to demonstrate all they know, and professors gain clearer insight into that knowledge. In pilots, students found that the platform interprets their responses correctly and alleviates testing stress, while professors report gaining a deeper understanding of what students learned.

You'll also find a story about mechanical engineering students who set out to build something that could help people—starting with a haptic glove, then pivoting through physical therapy, before a connection through the Northwestern network pointed them toward warehouses instead. It's a great example of how our educational ecosystem supports students through the inevitable pivots of the entrepreneurial journey.

As always, it has already been a busy fall here at Northwestern. I am continually inspired by the energy students bring to our halls, and when I meet with alumni, I see how that energy endures. It is an honor to be a part of this network of innovators and problem-solvers—people who never stop wanting to help.



CHRISTOPHER A. SCHUH
Dean, McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science

On the Cover
Northwestern Engineering researchers are developing new technologies and methods to prevent blindness, restore hearing, facilitate feeling through touch, improve the ability of wheelchair users to better navigate their environments, and help stroke survivors walk. Read more on page 12.

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