GREETINGS FROM NORTHWESTERN ENGINEERING

Anticipating and adapting to change is what engineers do. We need only to think back to a year ago to realize how quickly changes can come and shift our worldview forever.

This issue of Northwestern Engineering is full of stories that show how well our community has faced COVID-19 together and adjusted with creativity and perseverance.

Let me emphasize the word “together.” Though we have been physically distanced—some of us operating from the other side of the world and others working mere blocks from campus—we remain one strong, connected community. This year, we have forged and tested bonds in research, in teaching, and, importantly, with each other.

In this issue you will find stories that show how our students and faculty have handled this unusual year’s challenges—by pivoting research topics, adjusting pedagogy, juggling family obligations, and more—all while playing the dual roles of offering and receiving support.

This is not the first time in Northwestern’s history that we have weathered intense change. In this issue, we highlight how the GI Bill reshaped our campus after World War II, with students living in Quonset huts quickly built throughout campus. As always, the challenge tested Northwestern’s mettle, and we emerged stronger.

Challenges inspire innovation, which in turn fosters new business opportunities. Now, under Hayes Ferguson’s leadership at the Farley Center, we will take entrepreneurship education to a new level.

Meanwhile, we continue work on pressing problems of our times—including environmental issues. The Center for Synthetic Biology is working on possible routes to produce cleaner water by reprogramming cellular machineries, while Josiah Hester used a battery-free Game Boy to exemplify what is possible in the realm of environmentally sound electronic devices.

These stories feature only a few of those who have persevered in our community. I applaud all of you for standing up to these unexpected challenges with equal amounts of grace and tenacity. I am grateful for your ongoing support.

As always, I welcome your feedback.

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

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On the Cover With COVID-19 restrictions in place, Northwestern offers hybrid classes, including this one led by Professor Karen Smilowitz, with some students taking part on campus and others attending virtually. Photography by Steven E. Gross Some images predate COVID-19 regulations.

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