Over the past decade, the number of students studying computer science at Northwestern Engineering has grown exponentially. Additionally, students from across Northwestern are adding CS as part of their own plans of study. The field touches nearly every component of society and industry, and computational thinking has become an essential skill in many jobs. Because of this influx, our Department of Computer Science faculty continually reexamine how we teach computer science courses and how to expand the reach of our courses to students from all backgrounds. In this issue, you can read about their efforts and the new courses that have been developed to reach across disciplines. Current and future students will benefit greatly from their work.

In academia, the idea of collaborating across disciplines has gone from novel to necessary. One way to formalize these collaborations is by hiring faculty who share appointments across disciplines; this now accounts for 20 percent of our faculty. Another is through the development of interdisciplinary centers. At the McCormick School of Engineering, we are fortunate to be home to more than two dozen academic centers, which bring together researchers from across the university and industry to create new knowledge and tackle society’s grand challenges. Some, like the Northwestern University Transportation Center, have been around for decades and have provided lasting leadership in the field, while others, like the Center for Advancing Safety of Machine Intelligence, are just launching and charting new ways of collaboration.

Also in this issue, you will find stories about innovative solutions our faculty are finding for problems such as counterfeit medicines, kidney allocation, and the pervasiveness of polymers and plastics in our environment. We also feature our colleague Jian Cao, who was recently elected to the National Academy of Engineering. It is wonderful to celebrate her achievements.

Spring is always a time of celebration, especially considering recent events, but as this issue shows, our students and faculty are also excited to work toward developing the new knowledge and solutions needed to confront our challenges.

As always, I welcome your feedback.

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

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