GREETINGS FROM NORTHWESTERN ENGINEERING

This issue of *Northwestern Engineering* magazine will be my last as dean. I will step down in August to focus on research, writing, and public speaking. It is bittersweet, but as I look back, I can see how much we have accomplished.

When I took the job, the McCormick School of Engineering was largely siloed, both within the University and from outside institutions. Connectedness, networks, and emergence became centerpieces of my leadership strategy. We are now arguably the most connected school in Northwestern; we have formal and informal initiatives not only with every school at Northwestern, but also with the Block Museum, Argonne National Laboratory, Art Institute of Chicago, and countless other institutions. We went from isolated to connected. We changed the hardest thing to change in an organization: its culture.

It took a group effort to change McCormick’s culture at all levels. We created university-wide initiatives that spread design (via the Segal Design Institute) and entrepreneurship (via the Farley Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation) throughout Northwestern. We recruited new faculty, with a dramatic increase in joint appointments. Research funding doubled, and Northwestern Engineering now ranks consistently at the top in Northwestern’s inventions, disclosures, and number of startups.

We transformed the student experience, hiring first-year advisers, establishing programming that encouraged well-being, and encouraging new student groups. We created new master’s programs, relaunched old ones with new curricula, and developed courses that brought together undergraduate and graduate students from across disciplines.

Central to this was our whole-brain philosophy, the compass that continually guided us toward success. Of course, my tenure was not without its challenges. We weathered economic crises and COVID-19, and we are still living with residual effects of the pandemic—many initiatives remain unrealized. That was likely inevitable, but it also leaves the door open for the next leader.

It has been an honor and a privilege to have been entrusted to serve in this role. I am not retiring; I will still be a part of Northwestern Engineering and the University as a whole, as I navigate this new phase of my career. I am more than eager to help in any way I can to help my successor lead us toward greater success. I leave this job even more convinced of the great possibilities ahead for our school.

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On the Cover
Dean Julio M. Ottino’s whole-brain philosophy has transformed Northwestern Engineering’s culture, education, and research. Read more on page 12.
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