Letter from the Editor: Pivot

I would first like to thank Thomas (Tom) H. Colledge, PhD, PE, for establishing the International Journal for Service Learning in Engineering, Humanitarian Engineering and Social Entrepreneurship (IJSLE) in 2006 and serving as its Editor-in-Chief for the first 13 years. I was humbled and excited when Tom asked me to take over as the editor about a year ago. And of course I underestimated the amount of work involved. Therefore, this editorial thanking Tom and introducing myself as the new editor is about a year overdue. A heartfelt thanks to Tom for creating this forum to share what we have learned as we strive to continuously improve our application of engineering to help, in partnership with communities worldwide. Apologies to our authors for slow review process since I became the editor; I plan to do better in the future.

This journal is truly a community effort, requiring the service of reviewers who are committed to the quality of the contributions. I thank Thomas Soerens for handling the peer review process for an article on which I am a co-author and thus had a conflict of interest. I particularly appreciate the recent efforts of Elizabeth (Libby) Jones and Brian Roth, who served as guest editors for the recent special edition focused on Engineers Without Borders USA (EWB-USA) activities. I invite others who have an idea for a special issue to reach out to me with your ideas. For example, we had planned a special issue associated with the Engineering Community Engagement and Service-Learning Workshop in July 2020, modeled after the Clive L. Dym Mudd Design workshops. Lead organizer William (Bill) Oakes of Purdue University noted significant global interest in the workshop before it was cancelled due to uncertainty surrounding the global pandemic. This effort will be delayed until 2021.

Readers will appreciate that we are in very unusual circumstances during this global pandemic. My university cancelled all in-person classes and transitioned to remote learning starting March 12, 2020, and through spring semester. Social distancing measures around the country in some ways make it hard to feel connected. However, in other ways the global challenge perhaps unites us. Our work with communities has likely been disrupted and changed, but the need is as great as ever. I have been inspired by folks at universities using 3D printers and equipment to help make face shields and respirator masks for the medical community.\(^1\) Engineering is visible in the creative ways that ventilators are being repaired and retrofitted to serve two people, and modifying anesthesia gas machines and snorkeling equipment to serve as ventilators.\(^2\)-\(^5\) We have an opportunity to use the current situation as a teachable moment, inviting our students to recognize our common humanity and the ways their choices and behaviors can have life-and-death impacts for people around the world.\(^6\)-\(^7\) This shock may push faculty to learn how to better support students in general (through personal traumas and school related stresses beyond coronavirus), as well as improve our online teaching and collaboration skills.\(^8\) I am sure that you are all working to find creative solutions, and look forward to a time when we can safely resume our in-person collaborations.

As many of us may be constrained from our usual ‘busy’ activities, perhaps this will provide a time for reflection on what you have accomplished and future directions. Perhaps in this pause we will become more appreciative of our families and communities. There continues to be a worldwide need for partnerships between communities and educational institutions, realizing
mutual benefits for communities, students, and faculty. Our journal welcomes your contributions related to a breadth of areas: engineering design projects as service, engineering research projects as service, engineering-related entrepreneurial projects as service, and pedagogy in engineering-related community engagement. I look forward to reading your manuscripts.

I wish everyone health and wellness as we pivot to accommodate present circumstances.

Sincerely,
Angela R. Bielefeldt, PhD, PE
Editor-in-Chief, IJSLE


