ACADEMY OF DISTINGUISHED ENGINEERS
CLASS OF 2023

Celebrating
FORTY YEARS OF EXCELLENCE
The UConn Academy of Distinguished Engineers is a highly selective and esteemed community of accomplished alumni and friends who have made exceptional contributions to their fields of engineering. Membership in the academy is a recognition of an individual’s significant achievements and leadership in their profession, as well as their commitment to the advancement of engineering education and research. The academy’s members are considered to be among the most successful and distinguished engineers in their respective fields.
This honor recognizes School of Engineering alumni and friends for their exemplary contributions to the engineering profession through research, practice, education, policy, or service. As leaders and model citizens, these individuals bring pride to UConn Engineering.


www.engr.uconn.edu/academy-profile
Anthony L. (Tony) D’Andrea (1972) is a native of Greenwich, Conn. and is the President of Rocco V. D’Andrea, Inc., a land-use consulting firm, that has served clients in Connecticut and neighboring Westchester County, New York since 1947. Tony has managed the day-to-day operation of the company since 1977, and with his brother Len, who joined him in 1982. D’Andrea graduated from the University of Connecticut with a bachelor’s in Civil Engineering.

Still working every day at 74, D’Andrea has responsibility for design and review of major civil engineering projects. He has served the State of Connecticut as the Chairman of the Board of Examiners for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors since 1995, when he was appointed by Governor John Rowland. As Chairman, D’Andrea and the board have the responsibility for reviewing qualifications of applicants for licensure as professional engineers and land surveyors. D’Andrea is licensed as a professional engineer and land surveyor.

D’Andrea’s firm of 32 engineers, land surveyors, and technicians has the reputation for designing complex commercial and residential developments for private and municipal clients.

He is a lifelong Fairfield County resident, has been married for 41 years, and has two grown sons, Craig and Chris, and one grandson, Rory. His hobbies include golf, gardening, cooking, and of course, working!
Brian Heery (1981) is Chairman of the Board for Mitsubishi Electric Power Products, Inc. (MEPPI), a wholly owned subsidiary of Mitsubishi Electric Corporation. MEPPI supplies systems and solutions to infrastructure owners in North America. The company is headquartered in the Pittsburgh, Penn. region. Heery received a bachelor’s in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Connecticut.

Heery spent the first decade of his career working in the electric power industries of Westinghouse Electric Corporation. He joined Mitsubishi Electric in 1989 at the formation of MEPPI.

Heery began his career in technical sales and later moved into manufacturing and general management. He became the company’s President in 2008 and served as its chief executive until 2023. He also served as the MEPPI executive representative for several industry associations.

During his career, Heery managed operations supplying products into numerous industries: electric power, rail transportation, data centers, communications and municipal water. MEPPI also provided large video display systems in iconic venues like Dallas Stadium, Fenway Park and Yankee Stadium.

Beginning as a sales company, MEPPI’s local operations increased in scope under Heery to include manufacturing, system integration, consulting, software development, project management and after-sales service. The company has grown both through local investment and acquisition to approximately 1,100 employees located in North America and Scotland.

He and his wife Linda have three sons and live in Gibsonia, Penn. He has been active in the Pittsburgh community in economic development and social programs for children and adults with disabilities.
Richard M. Ierardi (1988, 1996) is an engineering Fellow for Pratt & Whitney, a world leader in the design, manufacture, and service of aircraft gas turbine engines. Richard holds both a bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Electrical and Computer Engineering from the University of Connecticut. In his role at Pratt, he provides technical leadership to develop the processes, standards, and organizational skills needed for the development and deployment of safety-critical software for aerospace applications. His current job responsibilities include ensuring product quality, advancing methods and techniques, mentoring the next generation work force, identification and solving of technical problems, and interfacing and influencing industry standards and norms.

He has worked at Raytheon Technologies for his entire career, beginning at Collins Aerospace (formerly Hamilton Standard) and continuing at Pratt & Whitney. With 35 years of experience in the development of leading-edge military and commercial engine control systems, his experiences include design and development of digital electronic engine control and diagnostic hardware for the F-22, X-35, and F-35; on-site engine and flight test support; integration of propulsion system and aircraft control systems for the Joint Strike Fighter (2001 Collier Trophy Award); engine control software development and validation for the F-35 including the short take-off and vertical landing variant; and control system product leader for the first commercial certification of the geared turbo-fan product family of engines. In addition, he is a member of SAE’S Electronic Engine Controls Committee since 2019. Ierardi was born and raised in Connecticut.
Nader Jalili (1998) obtained his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Sharif University of Technology in Tehran, Iran, in 1992 and 1995, respectively; and his doctorate degree from the University of Connecticut, all in mechanical engineering. Dr. Jalili joined Southern Methodist University (SMU) as the Mary and Richard Templeton Dean of Lyle School of Engineering in March 2023. He was formerly professor and head of mechanical engineering department at the University of Alabama (UA) since 2018. In his role at UA, Nader led a significant increase in external research awards and enrollment as well as creation of the Alabama Initiative on Manufacturing Development and Education. Prior to UA, he was Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Associate Department Chair for Graduate Studies and Research, and Director of Northeastern University Piezoelectric Systems Laboratory at Northeastern University. While at Northeastern, Dr. Jalili facilitated the creation of several new degree programs in areas such as mechatronics, robotics and human-machine interface, while leading graduate student recruitment and admission and overseeing department research activities.

An ASME Fellow, Dr. Jalili is an innovative leader and researcher, known for bringing the resources of engineering education and research to undergraduate and graduate students, industry partners and community outreach programs. Dr. Jalili has been principal investigator or co-principal investigator on more than $17 million in external funding in the domain of vibration, control and robotics-based manufacturing. He is the author/co-author of more than 350 peer-reviewed technical publications; including 135 journal papers, two textbooks and five book chapters.
Anne-Marie McDonnell (1996) received a master’s degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Connecticut and a bachelor’s degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Massachusetts in 1986. She recently retired from the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) after 35 years of service with a career encompassing a wide variety of research and engineering challenges.

Her research included the evaluation and implementation of advanced technologies including pavement management systems and weigh-in-motion technologies. She led in the coordination of numerous collaborative programs, including the Federal Highway Administration Emergency Relief funds and the Strategic Highway Research Program in CT. Recently, she was a leader in the development and implementation of a Transportation Asset Management Program for CTDOT. McDonnell was active in national, international and regional transportation organizations on numerous committees and leadership roles including Transportation Research Board and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

McDonnell collaborated with the University of Connecticut on projects throughout her career including work on pavements, bridge weigh-in-motion, materials and winter highway maintenance. A highlight of this collaboration was receiving the Best Paper Award together with Dr. Richard Christenson and Dr. Sarira Motaref at the 2012 International Conference on Weigh-In-Motion. McDonnell served as secretary to the Joint Highway Research Council between UConn and CTDOT and as liaison for numerous projects. McDonnell also served as the CTDOT coordinator for the university Senior Design projects.

McDonnell proudly shares that all members of her family are UConn alumni, husband Michael, M.S. CE 1997, daughters Alyssa, M.S. ARE 2021 and Christina, B.A. DMD (Digital Media Design) 2021.
Matthew J. Olander (1994) was named Vice President for Design and Engineering at General Dynamics Electric Boat in Groton, Connecticut in January 2021. In this role, Olander leads all new nuclear submarine designs, Electric Boat’s Independent Research and Development (IRaD) and Concept Formulation (CONFORM). He oversees a diverse team of over 4,000 designers and engineers, and is the champion for Electric Boat’s digital transformation.

Olander graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute with a master’s degree in Mechanical Engineering and University of Connecticut with a dual bachelor’s degree in Mechanical Engineering and Metallurgy.

Prior to his current assignment, Olander was the Program Director of Virginia Design and CONFORM. In this role, Olander executed an organizational realignment to bring all classes of fast attack submarine design efforts under a single director for the first time. Previously, Olander took over as Director of CONFORM and IRaD in 2015, where he led these organizations to challenge historic paradigms and develop breakthrough advancements in submarine warfighting capability. Prior to these assignments, Olander held key roles developing new capabilities for USS Jimmy Carter earning him the General Dynamics Technology Excellence Award in 2004.

Olander currently sits on advisory boards for the University of Connecticut School of Engineering and the National Institute for Undersea Vehicle Technology (NIUVT), and is Electric Boat’s Executive member for General Dynamics Engineering and Technology Council. Olander also previously served as Executive Control Board Member of the National Shipbuilding Research Program.
Vineet Sahasrabudhe is Director of Engineering Sciences and Systems Engineering at Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin Company.

As Engineering Sciences lead, Sahasrabudhe is responsible for core disciplines including aerodynamics, experimental aeromechanics, dynamics, handling qualities and control laws, simulation, loads, mass properties, noise and vibration, thermal management and survivability. As systems engineering lead, his organization covers all aircraft level systems engineering functions across programs, including core systems engineering, configuration management and preliminary design.

Sahasrabudhe joined Sikorsky in 2000 as a Handling Qualities and Control Laws Engineer and has worked on multiple programs, including RAH-66 Comanche, and the Canadian Maritime Helicopter Program. He was the control laws lead on CH-53K helicopter and Chief of the Handling Qualities and Control Laws group, in addition to leading multiple research and development programs.

He is a member of the Vertical Flight Society/American Helicopter Society (VFS/AHS) and serves on the SAE Aerospace Council, the UConn Systems Engineering Industrial Advisory Board and the UConn Professional Education Advisory Board.

Sahasrabudhe is a recipient of multiple individual and team awards including the Marshall Tan Award from Sikorsky Aircraft, and the Francois-Xavier Bagnoud and Howard Hughes Awards, both from the VFS.

He was named a Technical Fellow of the VFS in 2018, and was inducted into the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering in 2022. He has published several conference and journal papers and holds 17+ patents.
Michael J. Sarpu (1984) is a retired Lockheed Martin Operations Executive with over 35 years of professional experience. Sarpu graduated from the University of Connecticut with a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering, and from the University of Central Florida with a master's degree in Business Administration.

Sarpu's career started with 15 years of engineering assignments, building his technical acumen and problem-solving skills. His career progressed to leading operations organizations with groups approaching 16,000 people responsible for all aspects of product fabrication, acquisition and delivery.

Over his career, Sarpu developed methods to uncover performance issues, implement lasting solutions and create large-scale integrated supply chains. In 2015, he led the integration of Sikorsky Aircraft’s Operations elements into the corporation. In 2018, he was called upon to lead the F-35 program to achieve sustained full-rate production which occurred in 2019. He ended his career as Vice President of Corporate Operations developing practices to integrate the corporation into a common model-based execution environment.

Sarpu was a part of many critical business initiatives including a founding member of the Corporate Sustainability Council and led the corporation's Operations Leadership Development Program for over ten years.

Sarpu's lifetime passion is automobiles and throughout his career he has spent nights and weekends fabricating automotive projects from simple modifications to ground up builds in his fully outfitted home workshop. He is also an avid traveler and cyclist. He and his wife reside in Florida and frequently visit their daughter in Colorado.
Richard L. Thibeault (1974) is a Principal Investigator for Shipboard Electromagnetic Compatibility Improvement Program (SEMCIP) for all active fleet United States submarines. Thibeault graduated from the University of Connecticut with a bachelor’s degree in Electrical Engineering. Thibeault developed a “line of defense” concept that coordinates fleet, naval shipyard and EMC engineering personnel in the detection, correction, and prevention of electromagnetic interference (EMI) on submarines. Thibeault also investigated submarine mission degrading EMI problems reported by the fleet and developed corrective actions for them. One such corrective action was awarded a patent. These fixes were institutionalized and are currently installed on submarines. In support of SEMCIP, he developed EMC training courses, web-based fleet EMI awareness training, authored EMI test procedures and preventative maintenance that are currently in use by fleet, shipyard, and EMC engineering personnel.

Thibeault actively participates in Defense Exchange Agreements with the United Kingdom, Netherlands, and Norway to promulgate lessons learned in U.S. EMC technology, to our allies. Thibeault has received the Navy’s Haislmaier Memorial Award and the Naval Undersea Warfare Center (NUWC), Code 34 Sail Award.

Thibeault has worked at NUWC in Rhode Island for 44 years and has had many rewarding assignments above the water, that include work on periscope, radio room, sonar, and sub power systems. He also has had many assignments under the water, as a qualified Navy Diver and member of the NUWC Scientific Dive Team that includes work on hydrophone development, sonar dome repair, and proof of concept work on the Navy’s Wide Aperture Array. He also assisted author Roy Manstan by providing photographs used in his book “Cold Warriors” that documents the Scientific Dive Team.
Rising Star

GOLD RISING STAR AWARDS

The GOLD Rising Award recognizes graduates of the last decade (GOLD) alumni who inspire the world around them through their contributions to the field of engineering and/or the greater society while balancing the demands of being a recent graduate.
Morad Behandish (2016) is the Research Director for Digital Design and Manufacturing at the Palo Alto Research Center (PARC), where he oversees a multi-disciplinary research and commercialization program. He has also led the Computational Design area at PARC since he founded it in 2020 and has assembled a team of world-class scientists and engineers focused on designing the impossible. Behandish graduated with a master’s degree in CSE and a doctorate degree in ME, focused on incorporating the sense of touch in human-computer interaction with applications in mechanical assembly and drug design. His achievements were recognized by the Auran J. Fox entrepreneurship award from UConn Innovation Quest (iQ) and John Lof leadership award from UConn School of Engineering. He joined the International Computer Science Institute of UC Berkeley in 2016 as a Postdoctoral Fellow to work on interoperability of computational design systems. He joined PARC as a Research Scientist in 2017 to apply his expertise in geometric reasoning and computing to tackle design for hybrid additive and subtractive manufacturing. He expanded his research program at PARC in 2018-20 as a PI in multiple DARPA programs to developing design optimizers spanning system, assembly, and part-level analysis, building AI models that are grounded in physical first principles and democratizing computation for domain experts. During 2020-22, Behandish and his team supported advanced R&D for Xerox’s liquid metal 3D printing technology with process modeling and digital twin development. Behandish has also served the scientific community in various capacities such as an Editor of the CAD journal, Program Chair for the Solid and Physical Modeling symposia, EC member of the Solid Modeling Association, and judge/mentor for UConn iQ.
Nicole J. Piscopo (2015) began her journey in engineering at the University of Connecticut, where she excelled as a student in the BRIDGE Program, a five-week summer pipeline program for incoming freshmen offered through the Vergnano Institute, and earned a bachelor’s degree in Biomedical Engineering. During her undergraduate years, she conducted research in genetics and regenerative medicine, laying the foundation for her future work developing cutting-edge gene-based therapies. Piscopo went on to earn her doctorate degree in Biomedical Engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she initiated the Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T cell workstream in a Human Genome Engineering Lab. Her work on Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats (CRISPR) CAR T therapy earned her a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, a prestigious honor in the field.

Today, Piscopo is a Senior Engineer in Cell Therapy Process Development at CRISPR Therapeutics in the immuno-oncology division. Piscopo leverages her expertise in human genome editing to develop novel allogeneic cell therapies for cancer patients. Her passion for bringing new treatments to those in need is matched only by her desire to inspire the next generation of engineers. Since her start with UConn’s Engineering Ambassadors, she has been a dedicated mentor to students of all ages—from Girl Scouts to incoming freshmen—introducing them to the excitement and privilege of a career in engineering.
Academy of Distinguished Engineers

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Hamid R. Adib
Matthew Adiletta
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Stephen Altschuler
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John Augustyn
Anthony D. Autorino
Kelly A. Azeredo
Richard Ballantyne
James E. Barger
Anne Bartosewicz-Mele
William F. Beausoleil
Robert Becker
Scott Beecher
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Frank Bergonzi
Gary Bernstein
Ralph Bernstein
Bernard R. Berson
Lauris Berzins
Ronald R. Biederman
Chatschik Bisdikian
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Peter Blume
Taylor L. Booth
Kevin A. Bouley
Kenneth Bowes
Hadi Bozorgmanesh
Charles B. Brahm
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Timothy J. Bunning
Dennis M. Bushnell
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Michael A. Cantor
David Carter
G. Clifford Carter
T. Scott Case
John F. Cassidy
Diane E. Cauvuto
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Shi-Chung Chang
Franklin R. Chang-Diaz
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Hui Xu
Joseph H. Yan
David W. Zack
Konstantinos Zografos
In addition to their professional accomplishments, members of the UConn Academy of Distinguished Engineers are recognized for their philanthropy and dedication to giving back to their communities. Many members have established scholarships, endowed professorships, and research funds to support UConn engineering students and faculty, ensuring that future generations have access to the resources they need to succeed. Overall, the UConn Academy of Distinguished Engineers represents the very best of UConn engineering, and its members serve as a source of inspiration and pride for the entire university community.
Academy of Distinguished Engineers

We welcome your insight!

To nominate an individual for the Academy of Distinguished Engineers, please email engr-academy@uconn.edu.

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