

THE TECHNOLOGIST

A publication of the Eastern Illinois University School of Technology

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A Note from the Chairperson

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Gabriel Grant, and I am the new Chairperson of the School of Technology at Eastern Illinois University. I have been a full-time faculty member at EIU since 2008. Before joining the faculty, I was both an undergraduate and graduate student here, earning a Bachelor's degree in Industrial Technology and a Master's degree in Technology Management. Needless to say, I've been around for a while.

For many years, the department published a newsletter called The Technologist. Its purpose was to keep alumni, industry partners, and other stakeholders informed about faculty accomplishments, student projects, awards, and developments within the School of Technology. I have decided to revive the newsletter in a shorter, more frequent format so we can stay connected throughout the year. It also gives me an opportunity to answer a few questions before they arrive in my inbox.

New Office, Different Challenges

This marks the eighth different office I've occupied in Klehm Hall during my time at EIU. Over the summer, faculty offices were relocated to the first floor to improve student accessibility and encourage greater interaction among faculty members. Time will tell whether this creates the collaborative environment we hoped for or simply makes it harder for me to get any work done.

One thing that I think hasn't changed is our responsibility to use our resources intelligently. With the decline in international enrollment, public regional universities across the country are reevaluating how they serve their students and communities. Our School has always maintained a strong connection to industry and workforce needs. Over the years, we have created new undergraduate and graduate programs to address emerging opportunities and challenges in business and industry.

Curriculum development is an integral part of this constant process. Industries evolve, technologies change, and disruptive innovations such as artificial intelligence reshape workforce demands. Fortunately, I have the privilege of working alongside talented and innovative faculty members who embrace those challenges.



Last year, we completed a major standardization effort across our undergraduate programs to create more consistent degree requirements and reduce barriers to graduation. We also expanded opportunities for specialization in areas such as:

- Artificial Intelligence
- Big Data
- Software Development
- Logistics and Industrial Distribution
- Construction Management
- Animation and Visual Effects
- Game and Interactive media development
- Web Development

Our graduate programs are undergoing changes as well. It is my hope that by the end of this academic year, we will have more undergraduate students enrolled in our accelerated graduate programs and our Master's in Technology will be approved for online delivery to meet the demands of working professionals. Faculty are also introducing new topics that emphasize the practical application of knowledge and skills across a variety of contexts. I suspect this may require additional course updates, and some new courses that are needed by our regional stakeholders. Luckily, I think the faculty here are up for the task.

All of these changes are intended to provide students with greater flexibility while allowing them to develop skills that employers are actively seeking.

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Investing in Our Facilities

Strategic updates to our laboratories continue. Last academic year we installed new widescreen monitors to better support instruction and student projects in our Maker Lab. This project was supported by internal and external grants earned by faculty that work with students in the lab. Once we saw how much the monitors improved the student experience in the Maker Lab we went ahead and invested in widescreen monitors for the CAD lab. New high-end workstations for the Digital Media Lab were also purchased and installed over the summer. New tables and chairs were also purchased to improve the student experience for students engaged in digital media, computer and information technology, construction management, and engineering technology courses. Needless to say, working in STEC computer labs just got more comfortable.

Purchases of surveying equipment for construction classes, and camera lenses for our photography courses were also made possible from the School of Technology future fund. To any and all who have contributed to the School of Technology Future Fund over the years, I sincerely **thank you**.

Facilities personnel have been busy in providing touchups and repairs as needed to our spaces. It's odd how excited I get whenever I see that the painters have completed a project. I am grateful for their work as they continue to make our spaces better.

As I walk through our facilities, I continue to see opportunities for growth and innovation. I would love to upgrade our cybersecurity and networking lab. I envision creating additional outdoor facilities for construction management students. I also think that tools like laser engravers and water jets would be significant enhancements for our prototyping, CNC and production laboratories. This kind of investment of course takes time and has to be done strategically. The good news is that our faculty, advisory boards, and other stakeholders see the value and are diligent and helpful with their input. Faculty are currently creating a comprehensive equipment wish list that guides future investments and helps us identify opportunities to enhance student learning, support innovative projects, and strengthen capstone experiences. I'll share more about these initiatives in future editions.



Workin' Student Sampson Kubicek

I'd like to recognize one of our Workin' students in this issue.

Sampson Kubicek, a junior majoring in Digital Media Technology and a native of Kansas, Illinois, spent this past summer gaining valuable professional experience as a Marketing Intern with Rural King in Mattoon.

As a member of Rural King's Digital Media and Marketing Social Team, Sampson worked alongside a four-person team focused on content creation, graphic design, A/B testing, data analysis, and metric evaluation. The internship provided an opportunity to contribute to real-world marketing initiatives while gaining insight into the daily operations of a large retail organization.

Reflecting on the experience, Sampson said:

"I'm very grateful for the past months of on-the-job experience I've had."

Sampson described the internship as both

challenging and rewarding, noting that it was exciting to experience a corporate work environment and see firsthand how a major retailer operates on a daily basis. He also found it valuable to connect the concepts and skills learned in the classroom with professional practice.

"The hard skills I've developed in Digital Media Technology translated really well," Sampson explained. "My knowledge of Adobe products was especially helpful, and the experience helped me better see the connections between what we learn in class and how those skills are applied in the real world."

Experiences like Sampson's highlight the importance of partnerships between local businesses and our students. Internships provide opportunities to apply classroom knowledge, develop professional skills, build confidence, and gain valuable industry experience before graduation.

We are proud of Sampson's accomplishments and look forward to seeing where his education and career take him next.

If you are interested in offering an internship opportunity to an EIU student (or Sampson), please feel free to reach out to Gabe Grant, Department Chairperson at gjgrant@eiu.edu.

Faculty Highlight Dr. Wutthigrai Boonsuk

One topic I hear about regularly from our advisory board members and industry partners is the increasing role of automation and robotics in manufacturing. Whether it is at local employers such as Libman's in Arcola or Hydro-Gear in Sullivan, demand for graduates with automation and robotics experience continues to grow. That is why I am grateful to have faculty members like Dr. Boonsuk on our team.

Dr. Boonsuk earned his Ph.D. from Iowa State University and has been a member of the EIU faculty since 2011. During his time here, he has taught numerous courses related to automation, robotics, and advanced manufacturing while mentoring students through independent studies and research projects.

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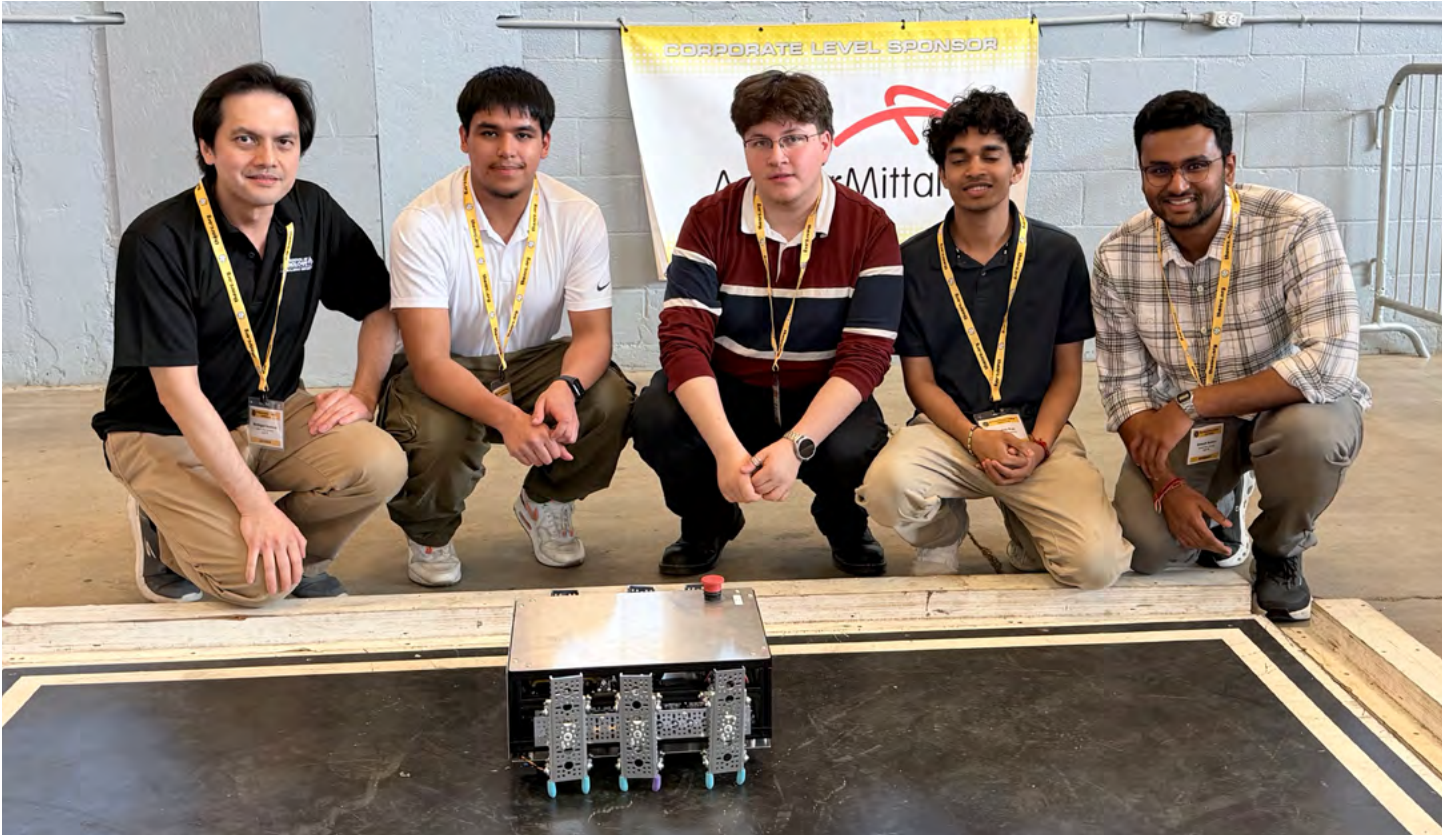


Photo: Dr. Boonsuk (First on left) with students at National Robotics Competition.

Perhaps most notably, Dr. Boonsuk has guided student teams competing in both ATMAE and BattleBots-style robotics competitions. Recently the Robotics teams earned 3rd place in the Micromouse contest and 2nd place in the Sumo Robot contest at last years National Robotics Competition in Marion, Ohio. These projects bring together students from Engineering Technology, Computer Technology, Computer Science, and other disciplines to design, build, troubleshoot, and operate robotic systems.

This past spring, I had the opportunity to work directly with Dr. Boonsuk on an interdisciplinary grant project involving the development of an automated 3D scanning system. His attention to detail, patience, and steady leadership are exactly the qualities you want in an educator working with students who may be encountering robotics technology for the very first time.

Dr. Boonsuk, thank you for everything you do for our students and the School of Technology.

Workin' Alum Danny Stock

One of the most rewarding parts of serving in higher education is seeing where our graduates' careers take them after they leave EIU. This issue's Workin' Alum is Danny Stock, whose career has taken him from the School of Technology to engineering and manufacturing leadership roles with global impact.

Since graduating, Danny has built an impressive career in engineering and manufacturing. One of his earliest leadership opportunities was serving as a Division Manager, where he helped start and grow an industrial fabrication division from the ground up. The experience provided valuable lessons in leadership, team building, and operational management.

Today, Danny serves as Director of Engineering at InCon Process Systems, where he leads the engineering team responsible for designing and building custom chemical process plants for customers around the world. His work has provided opportunities to collaborate with customers and project teams across multiple countries while delivering complex engineering solutions.

Are you Workin'? Let us know!

If you are a Workin' Alum please reach out to us. We would love to hear from you. Click the button below and fill out the form to let us know where you are Workin' or what you are Workin' on:

Let us know what is new with you!

Where Are They Now?

Dr. David Melton

Still in Charleston. Next question. Just kidding.

Dr. David Melton retired from the School of Technology after twenty years of service. In his final year, he served as School Chairperson and helped lead improvements to laboratory facilities, undergraduate curriculum changes, and several important strategic initiatives.

His retirement plans include traveling with his wife, spending time with children and grandchildren, and occasionally stopping by Klehm Hall to mentor faculty members. Retirement has apparently been far busier than expected.

If I can get permission from his wife, I may even convince him to help with a class or two someday.

If you'd like to support Dr. Melton, feel free to send peanut M&M's or Reese's to the School of Technology office. We'll make sure they find their way to him.



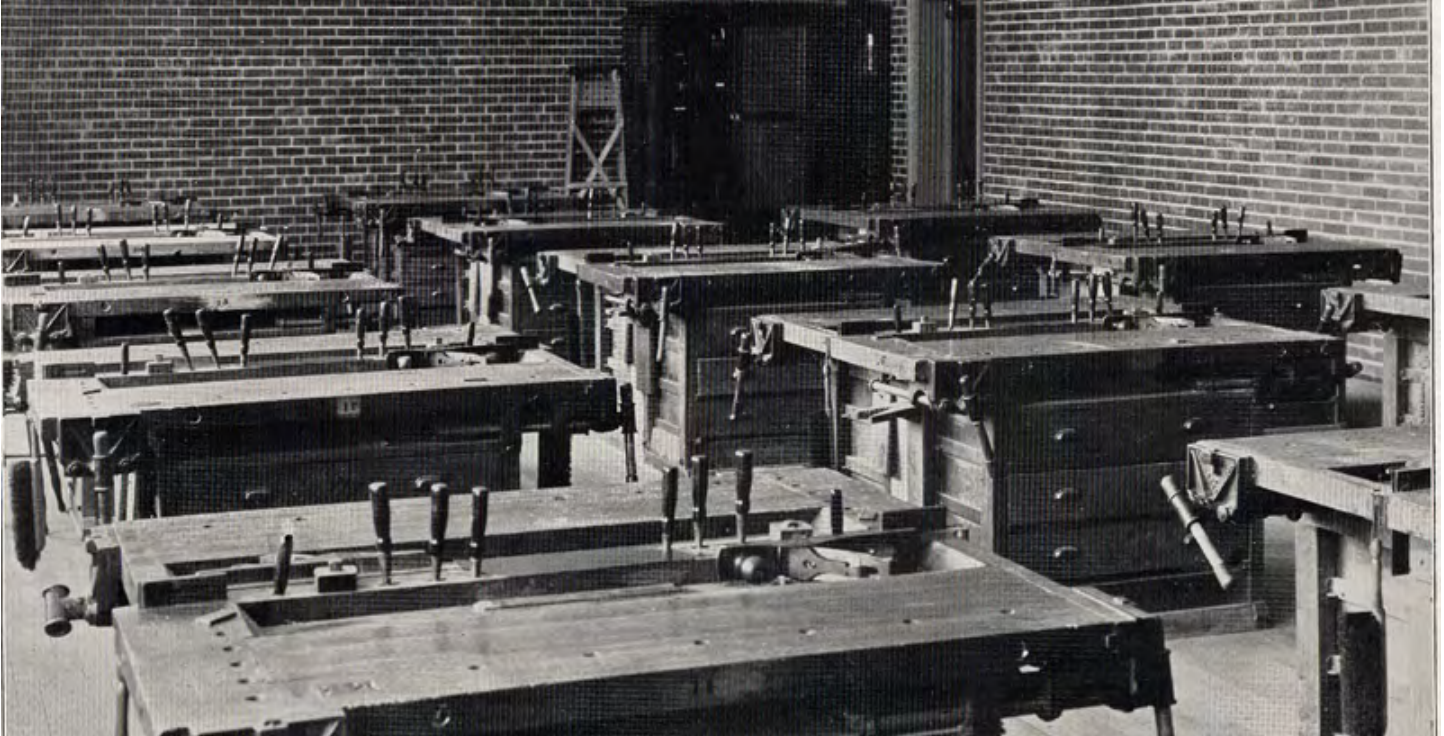
Reflecting on his time at EIU, Danny credits the School of Technology with providing a strong foundation that continues to support him throughout his career. Beyond technical knowledge, he notes that the program helped him develop problem-solving skills, teamwork, and a mindset of continuous learning that has proven invaluable as technology and industry continue to evolve. As Danny puts it:

"The School of Technology gave me a foundation that I still rely on today. The hands-on experience and practical approach to learning helped prepare me for opportunities I never expected, from starting a fabrication division to leading engineering teams on projects around the world."

We are proud of Danny's accomplishments and grateful that he continues to represent the School of Technology so well. His success is a reminder of what can happen when talented students combine hard work, practical experience, and a willingness to embrace new challenges.

Keep up the good work Danny!

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Celebrating 125 Years

I would bet that when Carolyn A. Forbes began teaching Manual Training in Old Main 1902 that she didn't think about the legacy she was starting. Now, at 125 years later, the School of Technology is one of the best-established academic departments on campus

As we celebrate our 125th anniversary, I look forward to connecting and reconnecting with alumni, donors, industry partners, and friends of the School. The first upcoming event will be on Homecoming weekend on October 23rd. You can join us in the Klehm Hall student lounge for light refreshments, tours of the labs, and conversations with students and faculty from 1-4 pm. Then on Saturday October 24th from 10 am to 1 pm you can come visit us in Tent City during tailgating with the Lumpkin College of Business and Technology. Find us and tell me who your favorite professor was in the School of Technology and you can receive a super cool campfire mug. In the spring we will have another event to continue to celebrate 125 years of technology at EIU.

These events will provide an opportunity to reflect on our history, celebrate our accomplishments, and reconnect with the many individuals who have helped shape our programs over the years.

To celebrate our anniversary and provide experiential learning opportunities, we have turned management of our social media accounts over to students in DGT 4814 Digital Media Strategy. If you are on Instagram, Facebook, or LinkedIn, be sure to Follow, Like and Share our student posts. Not only are you helping students learn about channel growth, analytics, and managing campaigns, you are also helping to elevate the status of your school, which is pretty cool too isn't it?

Follow us on Facebook

Follow us on Instagram

Follow us on LinkedIn



How You Can Help

I am constantly asked by alumni that I meet "What can I do to help EIU?" While financial support is always appreciated, there are many other meaningful ways you can help the School of Technology:

- Volunteer as a guest speaker and share your professional experiences with students.
- Offer job-shadowing opportunities so students can see what a typical day looks like in your profession.
- Mentor students for a few hours each semester. Help them understand what skills and experiences will best prepare them for their future careers.
- Serve on one of our advisory boards. Industry feedback is essential in helping us maintain relevant and effective programs.
- Create internship, part-time, or cooperative employment opportunities for students.
- Partner with student capstone teams on projects you don't have time to complete internally. Real-world projects create exceptional learning experiences.
- Encourage a family member, friend, or coworker to consider EIU and one of our School of Technology programs. I may be a little biased, but I truly believe the value of an EIU education is difficult to beat.

One of the initiatives I am championing this year is our Partner Pipeline. If you think you could contribute by partnering with the School of Technology, please click on the button below and visit the webpage with additional information and fill out the form to indicate your support.

Become an Industry Partner

For those interested in financial support, you can contribute to the School of Technology Gift Account, which supports students today.

Give a Gift for Today

We also have the the School of Technology Future Fund, which supports equipment and other needs for tomorrow.

Give a Gift for the Future Fund

You can read more about what a gift to the future fund and our School of Technology gift account goes to support by clicking the button below. You can also learn about the Dr. Tom Waskom Golf Outing which is another way to support EIU School of Technology students.

Learn what your gift does for students

"Let's seek the company of those who look on the bright side of things, those who know good things are possible, those who work to make good things come true, instead of reciting reasons why these things cannot be achieved."

Walter Heiby

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Faculty in Action

I don't think Joe Tillman, Instructor of Construction Management and Electrical Engineering, would mind me sharing this. Joe took his Society of Women Engineers group on a tour of the production lab during their 6 pm meeting a week or so ago. By the end of the night the girls were giddy about possible projects and were showing off their own photos of welding that they had done in high school. I think the phrase "laying dimes" was even dropped. Thanks for putting in the extra hours Joe. The students appreciate it.

Final Thoughts

I am excited to lead the School of Technology for the next chapter of its history. Like many public regional institutions, we face challenges. Yet I firmly believe our mission remains as important as ever: serving the educational and workforce needs of our region and our students. For 125 years, the School of Technology has adapted to meet changing demands while remaining committed to student success.

I am confident we will continue to do so for many years to come.

Thanks for taking the time to read this newsletter. If you know someone who did not receive this newsletter, please share it with them. Contact me if there is anything else that you have questions about.

Also, I may have been a little long-winded in this first newsletter. My father wrote a newspaper column for many years that reflected on rural life, farming, and the people who made those communities special. Perhaps that influence has shaped my writing style more than I realize. While academics often gravitate toward formal language and technical terminology, I believe communication is most effective when it is direct, authentic, and understandable.

Enjoy this day,