



FROM THE Advisory Board Chair

It is an honor and a privilege to have been elected chairman of the ECE Department Industrial Advisory Board (IAB). I have been associated with ECE for almost 25 years in various capacities including as a master's student, a Ph.D student, a research scientist, and the founder and president of a VPT Inc., a Virginia Tech spin-off company initially located in the Corporate Research Center and now located in the Blacksburg Industrial Park.

The Virginia Tech ECE department has truly outstanding undergraduate and graduate programs with excellent faculty world-renowned for its teaching and research. I can still remember when I was a master's student listening to a truly fascinating guest lecture by Professor Charles Bostian on satellite communications. After his researchers had received anomalous signals from the satellite dishes on the top of Whittemore Hall, they began to develop new theories of RF wave propagation only to later determine that the cause was a dead fly in the wave guide.

Virginia Tech has always been a leader in the application of technology directly in the classroom. It was not too long ago that Virginia Tech became the first engineering college in a land-grant university to require all incoming students to possess a personal computer. The state-of-the-art model at the time was an IBM PC with a whopping 640K of memory. This tradition continues with today's application of wireless tablet PCs in

the classroom.

ECE department excellence does not stop at great teaching. During my association with Tech I have witnessed ECE develop internationally recognized research programs in power electronics, fiber optics and sensors, wireless communications, microelectronics, computers, and others. The future challenges for the department are to establish leadership positions in a variety of emerging fields including nanomaterials, biomedical engineering, energy and the environment, and space science.

As alumni and members of the IAB, it is in our own interest to see the ECE department prosper and gain higher reputation. At VPT Inc., 100 percent of our engineers received a bachelor's or master's or Ph.D. from Virginia Tech. At Orbital Sciences Corp., which is also represented on the IAB, there are about 100 engineers with a Tech degree. My vision for the IAB is to encourage an active role for the members in several ways:

1. Alumni and IAB member companies can encourage practical experience by sponsoring undergraduate and graduate student interns. At VPT, we have had an active intern program for 12 years. This is a mutually beneficial relationship as VPT often hires the students full-time upon graduation.

2. Alumni and IAB member companies can participate directly in the classroom through guest lectures. Relating practical problems encountered in industry to the

classroom theory goes a long way with student understanding of course material.

3. Alumni and IAB member companies can sponsor research in areas of concern to them. VPT has been active in promoting the emerging space science group in the ECE Department and is also a member of Center for Power Electronic Systems (CPES) Industry-University Partnership Program.

4. Alumni and IAB member companies can take an active role in being advocates for the ECE department at the college and university level. ECE has been a traditional strength of the university. It is critical that it continues to receive appropriate priority.

5. Finally, alumni and IAB member companies can support the ECE department through generous financial donations.

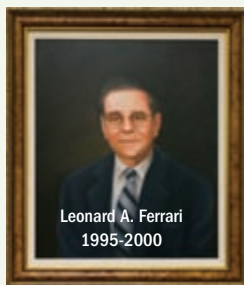
Jim Thorp has demonstrated remarkable leadership in focusing the department, and the IAB fully supports his efforts. The university is fortunate to have person of his stature, integrity, caliber, and vision as the ECE department head.

Great teaching, great research, great students, great alumni, great leadership—what more can one ask?

Dan Sable (MS '85, Ph.D. '91)
Chair, ECE Advisory Board



F. William Stephenson
1990-1994



Leonard A. Ferrari
1995-2000



Robert J. Trew
2001-2002



James S. Thorp
2004-present

In March, ECE began displaying portraits of the department heads who have served since ECE was established in 1892. We are seeking photos of W.A. Murray (1935-56) and M.M. Widener (1956-1958).