

FROM THE RUSS COLLEGE BOARD

by Mark Arnold
Chair, Russ College Board of Visitors



Mark Arnold, B.S.I.E. '81, M.B.A. '88, is chair of the Russ College Board of Visitors. Currently vice president and general manager of international operations for Advanced Drainage Systems, Inc. (ADS), the world's largest manufacturer of polyethylene drainage products, Arnold also is a Special Forces lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserve with 23 years of service. Most recently, he served in Afghanistan and Iraq. His career experience includes positions as director of national engineering and manager of distribution operations for ADS as well as various assignments in sales engineering, program management, and manufacturing during his 10-year career with GE. He and his wife, Karin, B.S. '81, live in Columbus with their daughter Kristen, 15, and son Eric, 13.

Mark Arnold

Last year at this time, I wrote to you about the challenges engineering education faces in regard to enrollment. Statistics showed that undergraduate and graduate applications and enrollment in U.S. engineering programs were declining. The Russ College itself saw a decline last year.

However, I'm happy to report that things are looking up. Our fall undergraduate class is 25 percent larger. The College is almost back to its enrollment in 2000, the last year we saw an increase in incoming students. Next fall, enrollment is expected to increase again, then remain level for several years.

Interestingly, our overall undergraduate student headcount is down. Fewer seniors are enrolled this year than usual. But, this is good news—it means our students are graduating on time. We attribute this to curriculum changes made in response to new accreditation review criteria (see “From the Dean’s Desk” on page 2 for more on our accreditation). We have also aligned ourselves with the university’s goal to reduce time to graduation.

All of our students are encountering some new faces in college leadership this year. Senior Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies Jerrel Mitchell returned to teaching and research in the School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) after serving the College more than 19 years in administrative roles. Stocker Visiting Professor Angie Bukley of EECS will fill the role on an interim basis. With more than 20 years of professional experience in defense and space systems, she has directed a broad range of research and development efforts during her career, working with NASA, the USAF, and other national security organizations.

J. Anthony Sharp has joined the Department of Aviation as chair, replacing Juan Merkt who returned to Jacksonville University. Sharp, who has more than 20 years of experience in higher education and aviation, was previously program manager for Flight Safety International, Inc., which trains more than 75,000 aviation professionals annually.

In addition, the Department of Industrial and Manufacturing Systems Engineering (IMSE) has new leadership in Cooper Industries Professor Robert Judd, formerly of EECS, now IMSE chair. In addition to 24 years of experience as an educator, researcher, and consultant in system simulation, discrete event controls, and systems integration, Judd is the author or co-author of more than 100 published papers in journals and conferences.

Dean Irwin also reorganized some dean’s office functions to better serve students. Cooperative education, minority outreach efforts, and the Engineering Ambassadors Program are now part of the office of the associate dean for academics, Ken Sampson.



Mark Arnold, B.S.I.E. '81, M.B.A. '88, presents the Russ College Board of Visitors/Robe Leadership Institute Leadership/Service Award at the Russ College’s spring awards celebration in April.

Looking ahead to the future, I’m particularly pleased to see that current drafts of Ohio University’s strategic plan, Vision Ohio, fit well with the Russ College’s existing and future strategic plans. In addition to outlining how to enhance student engagement and develop better budgeting processes, the College’s plan is also focused on graduate education and research goals. As you can see from President McDavis’s update on Vision Ohio (see page 14), improving our graduate programs and increasing research activity are key to helping Ohio University become a nationally prominent research university.

The College’s strategy is already being supported tactically by various work groups Dean Irwin has created. In addition to

responding to President McDavis’s concerns about diversity, the work groups will develop policies and strategies on faculty workload, physical space allocation, graduate student enrollment, and department and college performance measures. This latter area is crucial. The University allocates the College’s budget based on measurements such as student job placement, time to graduation, and how many classes are taught by full-time faculty.

It’s my pleasure as board chair to bring you these updates. And it’s my honor as a member of the board and our greater engineering community to share my insight with the College on how we can meet our challenges—and best prepare our future engineers to make the decisions that will help guide our nation and world. ☺