

July 1, 2013

Welcome Remarks by Professor Frode Eika-Sandnes

Member, iNEER Board

iCEER-2013 Opening Ceremony, July 1, 2013, Marrakesh, Morocco

Dear all!

On behalf of the iNEER board, a warm welcome to iCEER 2013 – the International Conference on Engineering Education and Research here in Marakesh, Morocco. We are extremely happy that the iNEER conference series finally has reached the African continent. The theme of this year's conference is borderless global engineering education, research and industrial development.

I myself have fond memories of Morocco as one of my first assignments as a graduate engineer was to work on a communications ground station in Rabat some 15 years ago. I feel very privileged to have been given the chance to experience and learn about Morocco from the inside. I vividly remember how truly different everything was, how friendly people were and at times how difficult it could be to make even the most simple project task happen.

The developments, challenges and opportunities on the African continent are different to that of the rest of the world. However, one common trait is that in order to develop and upgrade infrastructure there is a need for more engineers, and the throughput of the engineering professionals needs to be increased. There is thus a need for a steady stream of highly qualified and innovative engineering graduates. And there is a need for more focus on mathematics and physical sciences in schools. This is where WE fit in – the engineering educators.

Although, we are in Africa, the conference has a global scope. There are many interesting ongoing endeavors worldwide. For instance, some of you will be familiar with the uMultirank project which has selected both mechanical and electrical engineering as focus areas in the first round of evaluations, and it is anticipated that some 500 higher education institutions will participate. uMulitrnk will be a tool allowing all higher education institutions in all categories to benchmark internationally providing more meaningful institutional rankings by ensuring that apples are compared to apples and pears to pears. Students will more easily be able to identify institutions that are right for them. Another exciting area receiving much attention these days is that of MOOC – Massively Open Online Courses. A key question is if and how MOOC will affect the education of engineers. Regardless of your focus and perspective one common goal we all share is that we all strive for quality – quality in engineering education and research.

You have all contributed to the conference program which addresses a wide range of topics including accreditation and quality assurance in engineering education in Africa, outreach engineering education programs, international and regional campus networks, partnerships and stakeholders, distance education, laboratory experiences, student learning assessment and science technology and mathematics education.

The best ideas from previous conferences are presented in this year's volume of INNOVATIONS that is provided in your conference pack if you registered by April 30, 2013. Those of you who have ideas

on how to extend and strengthen your papers into archival articles with novel and useful contributions are encouraged to submit your work for consideration into the next year's edition of INNOVATIONS or one of the special journal issues prepared for this conference.

I would also like take the opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to all the individuals that has made this conference possible, first of all the general chairs Dr. Hamadou Saliah-Hassane and Dr. Amine Berqia and the local organizing committee for their hard work, but also the honorary chairs, the international advisory committee and the international steering committee.

I hope you make the most of the conference. Many of you are presenting papers and sharing your experiences, and some of you come to seek inspiration and new ideas. For me, the most important slots are the coffee breaks, common meals and social program. This is where we meet people and get immersed in rewarding discussions. I have found the iNEER conference series to be the prime venue for networking and establishing active contacts for educational and research collaborations. It is easy to connect with other conference delegates at this forum, everyone is open and eager to meet new people.

I hope you all also set aside some time to enjoy Marrakesh itself, walk around and enjoy the unique atmosphere of the bazaars and sample the very unique sounds, smells and sights.

I wish you a rewarding week in Marrakesh.

Thank you!

Frode Eika Sandnes, Ph.D. professor

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