Innovators at the Intersections

The outdoor Commencement ceremony on May 22 was a first for Johns Hopkins University. And this year, graduating students followed another new path. They entered Homewood Field under a banner reading “From this crossroads of knowledge...go and touch the world.” Like these new graduates, the Whiting School of Engineering is at a critical juncture. As the search continues for the successor to Dean Ilene Busch-Vishniac, Interim Dean Andrew S. Douglas will maintain the momentum.

The new dean will be coming into a School of exceptional strength that resonates out in many directions. In engineering and technology, some of the most exciting developments take place at the edges. The physical boundaries of the Homewood campus prove that theorem as well: The progress stretches from the acclaimed Mattin Center, to the enormously popular Ralph S. O’Connor Recreation Center, to the state-of-the-art Clark Hall, to the new marvel: high-tech Hodson Hall.

Drawn in part by the finest facilities, new generations of Whiting School researchers and teachers dare to be different. In this issue, we introduce several of them, including a civil engineer at the vanguard of a cultural shift who puts his research software out there for free. You’ll also become acquainted with a biomedical engineer singled out for pioneering one of the world’s top 10 emerging technologies.

At every intersection, our faculty, students, and alumni find colleagues who are equally intrigued by innovation (which happens to be the theme of the Whiting School’s campaign). They follow unusual paths to save lives and improve the quality of life worldwide. The result? Buildings less likely to collapse, biomedical devices that improve health care, safer ways to detect landmines, metallic glasses that are flexible and strong, among many other advances. Quite a few Hopkins engineers are doing their part in the global fight against terrorism and in the defense of homeland security.

At each point of our timeline, we find innovators pursuing their passions. Future engineers in local high schools are testing their skills with LEGO® robots, while today’s Westgate Scholars raise the bar on what it means to excel. Venture back along the path to the past, and you’ll encounter Dean Robert H. “Rob” Roy ’28, who needed two distinct careers to display his talents and to touch the lives of some very innovative students.

At Commencement, Whiting School alumnus Michael Bloomberg ’64, in accepting an honorary degree, cautioned the new graduates that their own career paths, like his, quite likely won’t follow a straight line. Investment banker...entrepreneur...executive...philanthropist/civic leader...big city mayor...Bloomberg has done it all. But, he predicted, “ Anything can happen, and it probably will,” so “when a unique opportunity comes along...and it will...go for it!” In this issue, we hope you’ll enjoy connecting with alumni, faculty, and student innovators as they “go for it.”

—The Editors
“They really encourage collaboration here.”

“This summer, I started my research in microbiology. I’m working with Konstantinos Konstantopoulos [associate professor], studying the gene expression of chondrocytes. It was really a big compliment to get a Heath Fellowship. I had the chance to meet Dr. Heath, and he was really interested in my research! He’d seen how women in engineering were underrepresented, and this was his way of giving back. His generosity has taken a lot of pressure off in terms of paying for books and lab materials.”

Kelly Hardesty
First-year PhD student in Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering

Carl Heath ’52, and his wife, Patricia, established at the Whiting School the Carl E. Heath Fund for the Support of Female Graduate Students in Engineering.