Leading by Example

Benjamin Patz (M.S., EE, ’85)
CECS 2011 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

Growing up, Ben Patz seemed destined to become a UCF Knight. A son of a UCF engineering professor, Patz took classes at UCF during his senior year in high school and during summer breaks while earning a bachelor’s degree in New York on a scholarship.

Patz later earned a master’s degree at UCF in electrical engineering while working at Lockheed Martin in Orlando.

Patz founded Coleman Technologies, Inc. After its merger he became president of the South Division of Presidio, Inc., a $1.4 billion systems engineering company.

“I’m extremely proud to be a UCF-educated electrical engineer.” Patz said.

Patz serves the university and CECS in multiple ways. He comes to UCF to guest speak about his career, serves on the CECS Dean’s Advisory Board, mentors students in engineering competitions, and raises funds for UCF to benefit CECS and push for engineering excellence.

Patz has been honored with UCF’s Professional Achievement Award and Ernst & Young’s Entrepreneur of the Year award for Florida.

His family of Knights includes his sister Susan (in the UCF basketball Hall of Fame) who is married to a former UCF Basketball player. His brother Mark has a Ph.D. in electrical engineering from UCF. His other sister Amy is also a UCF engineering graduate who is married to a UCF engineering graduate. And his niece is now a freshman at UCF.

His message for fellow CECS alumni is clear: come to UCF and get involved.

“Take a look around and be wowed by what UCF has done, and be very proud of CECS. Once you do that, you’ll become an advocate.”
Dear Alumni & Friends,

This issue of CECS Updates makes me especially proud because it showcases the very best of our college's 25,000-plus alumni worldwide. All seven CECS alumni featured illustrate the caliber of engineers and computer scientists that our college can produce and I am thrilled to share their stories.

The alumni were honored with awards of achievement in two events at UCF this past year.

The first is UCF’s annual Black & Gold Gala, held last fall during which Guillermo Novo was honored for his professional achievements and Harmony Myers was recognized as a rising star.

The second event is a new annual tradition in our college—the CECS Alumni Honors Reception—held this past spring during which Ben Patz was honored as the college distinguished alumnus awardee and Grace Bochenek, Lee Carrick, Munir Sindir and James Vinson were honored as distinguished alumni of their respective departments.

The CECS Alumni Honors Reception represents our own way to celebrate the successes and accomplishments of our alumni. Every year, we plan to recognize alumni of our college who have made significant contributions to their professions with distinguished alumni awards. The recipients of these awards are nominated by faculty and peer alumni. As dean of CECS, there are no happier moments for me than when the contributions of our alumni are recognized by their peers.

When reading this issue, I am sure you will feel the same sense of pride that I do. Each alumni story illuminates a reason for staying connected with our college.

It is my hope that you will connect with CECS as well, if you haven't already. You can help inspire the next generation of highly successful engineers and computer scientists from UCF.

Finally, please stay in touch with us. As you’ll see from the alumni featured here, you’ll be glad you did.

Warm Regards,

Marwan A. Simaan, Ph.D., PE, Dean

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Painting a Global Picture

Guillermo Novo (B.S., IE, ’86)

ALUMNI PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

In his 25-year career, Guillermo Novo has lived and learned in many countries, including the United States, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Brazil, Mexico, Spain and Indonesia.

As a vice president of Dow Coating Materials in Philadelphia, Novo oversees the $3 billion operation of more than 40 manufacturing plants and operational facilities around the world. Novo’s division is the largest manufacturer and supplier of raw materials and additives for the coatings industry (think paints and coatings for everything from walls to roads, bridges, barges, pipelines and paper products).

For Novo, being a leader means doing his part to make the world healthier.

“The biggest push is water-based paint. In the past, paints contained unhealthy lead and solvents,” he said. “One of the most exciting innovations is a Dow ingredient for paint that absorbs harmful formaldehyde fumes in the air from carpets and woods.”

Novo praises the value of his UCF industrial engineering degree.

“Engineering is the best foundational education you can get and UCF’s program is top-notch,” Novo said. “CECS emphasizes critical thinking and problem solving, as well as teamwork and collaboration. These skills can be applied anywhere and are relevant to the real world.”

Recently Novo joined the CECS Dean’s Advisory Board.

“Being able to help people develop the skills they need to accomplish great things is my greatest professional reward,” Novo said. “It’s a lot like UCF—when the students succeed, so does the university.”

Aiming High

Harmony Myers (B.S., EE, ’00)

RISING STAR ALUMNA

Harmony Myers is NASA’s chief of the International Space Station (ISS) and Spacecraft Processing Safety, Quality and Mission Assurance Engineering Branch. She oversees the work of 15 staff and more than 700 contractors who process the payloads that go to the ISS.

As a female, she was often the minority in her UCF engineering classes. But UCF’s chapter of the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) provided the networking and camaraderie to navigate through a male-dominated field. Her involvement in SWE led to her first job at the United Space Alliance, where she used her UCF-acquired electrical engineering skills to conduct failure analysis and test the communication boxes on solid rocket boosters.

Staying involved with UCF and CECS is important and rewarding for Myers. She often speaks to UCF engineering students and advises the SWE student chapter. Not one to shy away from opportunity, she chaired SWE’s national convention in Orlando last year.

“The energy of more than 5,000 accomplished female engineers gathered together was exciting and inspirational, not just for me but for the engineering students.”

Diversity in the workplace, she says, is not just about race and gender. “It’s about diversity of ideas and education. “Employers try to look for the whole package,” she tells students.

Myers is amazed at how UCF has grown in the years since she graduated. “From academics to research to sports, the growth makes me really proud to be an alumna.”
From Air Force to Business Force

Lee Carrick
(B.S., CS, ’80)

EECS-CS 2011 Distinguished Alumni Award

Carrick began his military career as a distinguished graduate of UCF’s Air Force ROTC.

While in the Air Force, Carrick was involved in acquiring the GPS satellite system for the U.S. Department of Defense—the same system that connects to personal GPS devices.

“I grew up in Orlando and wanted to see the world, at least somewhere west of the Mississippi, but they sent me over two causeways to Cape Canaveral,” he quipped. “It turned out to be one of the best experiences of my life.”

He worked as a test engineer, supporting the first 13 space shuttle missions, helping to connect all ground systems to the flight vehicle.

After the Air Force, Carrick was an executive at Northrop Grumman and then president of a subsidiary of Perot Systems (a company founded by former presidential candidate Ross Perot).

He recently joined SAIC as senior vice president for Program Development for the Intelligence Systems business unit.

Carrick loves mentoring students. He reconnected with CECS after attending a UCF alumni event in the DC area.

“I want them to appreciate how valuable their education is. And I tell them to never compromise their reputation. Strong, successful leaders base their decisions on trust and base their actions on trusted relationships.”

Taking Action
Grace M. Bochenek
(Ph.D., IE, ’98)

JEMS 2011 Distinguished Alumni Award

Dr. Bochenek is the director of the U.S. Army’s Tank Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center (TARDEC), and she is the first female to serve in the role.

Based in Warren, MI, TARDEC upgrades and integrates technology for military vehicles to meet the rigorous demands of modern-day warfare. As director, Dr. Bochenek executes the $500 million research and development program, and manages a workforce of more than 1,200.

“It’s a rush to come to work every day to do such important work. I get to work with the world’s most renowned experts to implement key technologies on behalf of our nation.”

Her expertise comes from a 24-year career and the research she performed at UCF while working on her Ph.D. Dr. Bochenek’s research focused on virtual reality, 3D visualization, human computer interaction, interface design, human performance and usability testing.

Engineering, she says, is for people who always think about tomorrow and ways to improve the world.

“Brain research shows that women tend to approach problems more holistically, and men tend to focus on more specific details. Since different viewpoints often lead to better solutions, diversity is key.”

“At the end of the day,” Dr. Bochenek adds, “success is achieved from your character and a willingness to take action.”

An Electrifying Career
James E. Vinson (Ph.D., EE, ’98)

EECS-ECE 2011 Distinguished Alumni Award

Dr. Vinson is a world-recognized scientist in the field of electrostatic discharge (ESD) protection and reliability. He is the lead author of “ESD Design and Analysis Handbook,” a concise introduction to ESD and its effects.

As senior manager of Intersil Corporation’s Corporate Process Reliability Group, Dr. Vinson is responsible for wearout reliability, evaluation, failure analysis and ESD protection for all company products and processes.

Dr. Vinson sees his company’s partnership with UCF as mutually beneficial.

“When the Harris Corporation Engineering Center was built, professors and students got a better learning and research environment,” he said. “The new building also gave Intersil access to bigger and more advanced lab equipment to enhance our research endeavors. That kind of growth gives my company more incentive to continue working with UCF.”

And Dr. Vinson’s company has played a big part in the university’s expansion. Last year Intersil donated a 100,494 square-foot semi-conductor fabrication building in Palm Bay, FL, to UCF.

Dr. Vinson also mentors UCF summer interns and gives lectures on behalf of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. In 2010, he was elected as an Intersil Fellow, the highest technical rank in the company.

Rocket Scientist, UCF Original
Munir Sindir (B.S., ME, ’73)

MMAE 2011 Distinguished Alumni Award

Munir Sindir is an aerospace scientist, academic mentor, corporate executive and one of the first graduates of UCF, or Florida Technological University, as it was originally known.

As an executive at Pratt & Whitney Rocketdyne in California, Dr. Sindir supports all business aspects of rocket design, analysis, testing, materials, product support, software development, component product engineering and systems engineering, to serve customers such as NASA and the U.S. Air Force. He also serves on advisory boards at six universities and says that he truly enjoys mentoring young researchers.

In 2010, Dr. Sindir renewed his ties with UCF to explore collaborative opportunities in multiple engineering fields between his company and CECS.

“I hadn’t been to UCF for 37 years, and I was amazed at the achievements of the university and CECS. I am very impressed with the quality of research being done and the caliber of CECS’s faculty, staff and students.”

While he loves playing tennis and off-road driving with his classic Land Rovers that he collects and restores, Dr. Sindir doesn’t plan to retire any time soon.

“If you have a job that you like and a family that you love, that’s all you need.”
Mark Your Calendar

College Open House at CECS
Sept. 10, 2011

UCF Black & Gold Gala
Oct. 28, 2011

BBQ & Tailgate for
UCF Homecoming
Oct. 29, 2011

Alumni Honors Reception
March 22, 2012

CECS Alumni Chapter Golf Classic
March 23, 2012

The Harris Engineering Center at UCF houses the
CECS Department of Electrical Engineering and
Computer Science.