WEPAN

Women in Engineering ProActive Network

2025 WEPAN Awards

February 9-12, 2025

Presented at CoNECD and the WEPAN Women in Engineering Program Day

ABOUT THE AWARDS

WEPAN Awards honor key individuals, programs, and organizations for accomplishments that underscore WEPAN's mission to advance cultures of inclusion and diversity in engineering education and professions. WEPAN Award honorees demonstrate extraordinary service, significant achievement, model programs, and exemplary work environments.

This year's WEPAN Awards were presented in conjunction with CoNECD and the WEPAN Women in Engineering Program Day.

ABOUT WEPAN

WEPAN was founded as a non-profit educational organization in 1990. It is the nation's first network dedicated to advancing cultures of inclusion and diversity in engineering higher education and workplaces. WEPAN connects people, research and practice. It offers powerful initiatives, projects and professional development that equips advocates with the tools to create sustainable, systems-level changes that allow ALL in engineering to thrive.

ABOUT WIEP

The Women in Engineering Program Day (WIEP) pays homage to WEPAN's origins as an organization founded by Women in Engineering Program practitioners. This fourth WIEP builds on the inaugural theme, calling us to remember our roots as we convene practitioners and other partners in the advancement of women in engineering to network, share resources, and discuss best practices for supporting women in engineering and synonymous programs at higher education institutions.

ABOUT CoNECD

The Collaborative Network for Engineering and Computing Diversity (CoNECD) Conference is the only conference dedicated to all the diverse groups that comprise our engineering and computing workforce. CoNECD (pronounced "connected") provide a forum for exploring current research and practices to enhance diversity and inclusion of all underrepresented populations in the engineering and computing professions including gender identity and expression, race and ethnicity, disability, veterans, LGBTQ+, 1st generation and socio-economic status.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WEPAN would like to thank the 2025 WEPAN Awards committee, Beth Anne Johnson, and Heather Metcalf for their work in organizing this event.

Advocates and Allies Award

Dr. Michael Smith
Executive Director, NAMEPA

Michael D. Smith has over 30 years of experience in non-profit organizational operations and change management, governance, program development and implementation, strategic planning, meeting and event planning, and DEI advocacy, with a specialty in STEM fields. He has delivered and supported strategies that have elevated the DEI efforts within nonprofits, academia and industry in their support of underrepresented minorities, persons with disabilities, persons within and allies to the LGBTQIA+ community, and young girls and women. “Dr. Mike” is Executive Director of the National Association of Multicultural Engineering Program Advocates (NAMEPA), a network committed to implementation of programs and policies to broaden participation in STEM.

Betty Vetter Research Award

Dr. Sarah Rodriguez
Associate Professor, Engineering Ed. & Faculty Affiliate, Higher Ed.
Virginia Tech

Dr. Sarah L. Rodriguez serves as an Associate Professor of Engineering Education at Virginia Tech. She concentrates on asking urgent questions about systemic inequities that marginalized communities, and particularly Latina students, experience within engineering and computing.

Co-editor of the book, Latin* Students in Engineering: An Intentional Focus on a Growing Population and author of the upcoming book, Supporting Latina Students in Engineering and Computing: A Chicana Feminist Approach (Harvard Education Press, 2025), her work demonstrates the assets that Latina students and their communities bring to engineering and computing and examines how we design environments that serve them.

Bevlee A. Watford Inclusive Excellence Award

Dr. Cecilia Rodriguez Aragon

Professor and Director of the Human-Centered Data Science Lab
University of Washington

Cecilia Aragon is a computer scientist, professor, award-winning author, and champion aerobatic pilot who has been committed to supporting the success of underrepresented groups in engineering for over four decades. The co-founder of Latinas in Computing, she is the first Latina to earn the rank of Full Professor in the College of Engineering at the University of Washington, and the first Latina pilot to represent the United States in the World Aerobatic Championships. She is co-founder and CTO of the mapping start-up Viata. Her memoir, FLYING FREE, shares her journey of breaking past her own fears to become a world-class pilot.

Distinguished Service Award

Dr. P.K. Imbrie

Vice Provost for Faculty Effectiveness, University of Oklahoma

P.K. Imbrie is an ASEE Fellow with B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in aerospace engineering from Texas A&M. He champions research-based engineering education and helped establish it as an academic discipline. His research spans experimental mechanics, piezospectroscopy, epistemologies, assessment, and modeling of student learning and success. He co-led creation of modern facilities at Purdue's i2i Lab and Texas A&M's largest engineering education building. Widely recognized for active and collaborative pedagogies, he co-authored Teamwork and Project Management, revolutionizing how students learn worldwide.

Educator's Award

Dr. Adeeba A. Raheem

Associate Professor and Director, Construction Safety Program
University of Texas at El Paso

Dr. Raheem serves as an Associate Professor and Director of the Construction Safety Program at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). She is an invited member of the President's Advisory Committee on Sustainability and represents the College of Engineering on UTEP's Academic Innovation Advisory Council. Dr. Raheem has secured over $5 million in research funding from various U.S. federal agencies and non-profit organizations, with a significant focus on supporting women in construction engineering. Her dedication to diversifying the construction workforce and her transformative influence on construction education have earned her numerous prestigious regional and national awards.

Founders Award

Dr. Mary Juhas

Professor Emerita, The Ohio State University

Mary Juhas is Professor Emerita in the Department of Materials Science & Engineering at The Ohio State University. She co-chairs the Government Engagement Working Group of the Engineering Research Visioning Alliance. Juhas developed REACH for Commercialization™, an innovation ecosystem for women-led teams. She served as WEPAN national president and board member. Juhas previously held positions at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and Edison Welding Institute. She earned a master's degree in Metallurgy & Materials Science from Carnegie Mellon University and a Ph.D. in Materials Science & Engineering from The Ohio State University.

Leader in Engineering Education Award

Dr. Alexandra Coso Strong

Associate Professor, Smith School of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering
Cornell University

Dr. Alexandra Coso Strong is an Associate Professor at Cornell University, with a joint appointment in the School of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering and the Systems Engineering Program. She joined Cornell after co-founding Florida International University's School of Universal Computing, Construction and Engineering Education and co-developing a Ph.D. in Engineering and Computing Education and a B.S. in Interdisciplinary Engineering. Coso Strong received her degrees in aerospace and systems engineering. Her current research focuses on approaches for sustainable change within engineering education and how we, as educators, can prepare the next generation of engineers to develop solutions to complex global challenges.

President's Award

Dr. Bevlee A. Watford

Professor Emerita, Virginia Tech

Dr. Bevlee A. Watford is Professor Emerita of Engineering Education, Associate Dean Emerita for Equity and Engagement, and Founding Executive Director Emerita of the Center for the Enhancement of Engineering Diversity for the College of Engineering at Virginia Tech. She has secured more than $20 million dollars in support for CEED focusing on recruitment and retention of underserved engineering students. Watford was the 2004-2005 WEPAN President. She is a Fellow of ASEE and was the 2017-2018 ASEE President. She served as an NSF program director in the Division of Undergraduate Education and the Division of Engineering Education and Centers, where she was responsible for the BPE portfolio. In 2023, she was nominated by President Biden to serve on the National Science Board.

Strategic Partner Award

NCWIT Higher Ed Team

Accepted by Jamie Huber Ward, NCWIT Project Director

ncwit.org | HIGHER ED ALLIANCE

The NCWIT Higher Ed team connects over 600 postsecondary institutions nationwide that are committed to advancing gender equity in computing and technology fields. The team supports systemic change by providing evidence-based tools, strategic guidance, and best practices for recruiting, retaining, and advancing women and gender-diverse individuals in postsecondary computing programs and careers. Alliance members gain access to initiatives such as NCWIT Learning Circles, the Tech Inclusion Journey® platform, and more. By connecting institutions and educators to evidence-based practices and each other, the Higher Ed team drives impactful, sustainable change in computing education across diverse campuses.

University Change Agent Award

Dr. Ala Qubbaj

Dean, College of Engineering, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Dr. Ala Qubbaj is the Dean of the College of Engineering & Computer Science at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) and a Professor of Mechanical Engineering. He is the founding Director of the NSF-funded Center for Broadening Participation in Engineering (CBPE), a pioneering initiative focused on supporting first-generation and low-income students in engineering.

During his over 25 years career in higher education, Dr. Qubbaj has spearheaded numerous initiatives aimed at enhancing both faculty and student success. His leadership has significantly expanded opportunities for underserved student populations, securing more than $20 million in external funding and earning national recognition.

Women in Engineering Champion Award

Nayleth Ramirez

Test Systems Engineer in Test Equipment Engineering, RTX

Nayleth Ramirez is a first-generation graduate raised in a low-income household in Tucson, AZ. She discovered STEM through the Math, Engineering, Science, and Achievements (MESA) outreach program in middle school. She went on to earn a B.S. in Systems Engineering from the University of Arizona and a M.Eng. in Systems Engineering and Technology Management from Rensselaer Polythechnic Institute. Nayleth is dedicated to promoting inclusion and diversity and mentoring younger generations in STEM. She believes in empowering the Hispanic community to reach its fullest potential and make a significant impact.

Women in Engineering Program Award

Women in Science and Engineering Program at the University of Arizona

Accepted by Stephanie Murphy, Director of WISE

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES
Women in Science & Engineering

The Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) program at the University of Arizona is dedicated to supporting the entry, persistence, and success of underrepresented students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Through a combination of local k-12 outreach programs, college student professional development opportunities, and institutional research and evaluation projects, we work to increase diversity in STEM and advocate for gender equity across STEM fields.

Michigan State University Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Broadening Participation K-12 College of Engineering

MSU has hosted its Introduce a Girl to Engineering event for eight years. A number of organizations through MSU's College of Engineering run the event, which is open to 4th to 8th graders of all genders. Participants have the opportunity to rotate through five different hands-on activities of their choosing, all designed to model the various fields in STEM. These activities span a wide range, from beginner coding to building lava lamps.