

IEEE WIE FORUM USA EAST

7-9 November 2024

Stamford Marriott Hotel & Spa

<https://attend.ieee.org/wie-forum-usa-east-2024/>



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**THANKS TO ALL
OF OUR
COMMITTEE
MEMBERS
AND ONSITE
VOLUNTEERS!**

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

THURSDAY, 7 NOVEMBER			
3:00 PM – 6:00 PM	REGISTRATION		
4:30 PM – 6:30 PM	NETWORKING RECEPTION		
7:00 PM – 10:00 PM	AN EVENING ON YOUR OWN (SEE WEBSITE FOR DETAILS)		
FRIDAY, 8 NOVEMBER			
7:00 AM – 4:30 PM	REGISTRATION		
7:15 AM – 9:00 AM	BREAKFAST		
8:00 AM – 8:15 AM	OPENING & WELCOME REMARKS		
8:15 AM – 9:00 AM	KEYNOTE		
9:00 AM – 9:45 AM	KEYNOTE		
9:45 AM – 10:15 AM	COFFEE BREAK & EXHIBITS		
	TRACK 1: EMPOWERMENT IN ACTION	TRACK 2: ENGINEERING THE FUTURE	TRACK 3: NAVIGATING CAREER SUCCESS
10:15 AM – 10:50 AM	PRESENTATION	PRESENTATION	WORKSHOP
10:55 AM – 11:30 AM	PRESENTATION	PRESENTATION	PRESENTATION
11:35 AM – 12:10 PM	WORKSHOP	PRESENTATION	PRESENTATION
12:10 PM – 1:25 PM	LUNCH & PANEL		
	TRACK 1: EMPOWERMENT IN ACTION	TRACK 2: ENGINEERING THE FUTURE	TRACK 3: NAVIGATING CAREER SUCCESS
1:25 PM – 2:00 PM	PRESENTATION	PANEL	PRESENTATION
2:05 PM – 2:40 PM	PRESENTATION		CAREER FAIR & EXHIBITS (2:00 PM- 4:45 PM)
2:45 PM – 3:20 PM	PRESENTATION	PRESENTATION	
3:25 PM – 4:10 PM		WORKSHOP	
4:10 PM – 4:45 PM	COFFEE BREAK & EXHIBITS		
4:50 PM – 5:35 PM	PANEL		
5:35 PM – 5:50 PM	DAY 1 WRAP-UP		
SATURDAY, 9 NOVEMBER			
7:00 AM – 10:00 AM	REGISTRATION		
7:15 AM – 9:00 AM	BREAKFAST		
7:50 AM – 8:00 AM	OPENING REMARKS		
8:00 AM – 8:45 AM	KEYNOTE		
8:45 AM – 9:30 AM	PANEL		
	TRACK 1: EMPOWERMENT IN ACTION	TRACK 2: ENGINEERING THE FUTURE	TRACK 3: NAVIGATING CAREER SUCCESS
9:35 AM – 10:10 AM		PRESENTATION	PRESENTATION
10:15 AM – 10:50 AM		PRESENTATION	WIE MEET & GREET NETWORKING EVENT
10:55 AM – 11:30 AM	MTTS NETWORKING EVENT	COFFEE BREAK	
11:35 AM – 12:10 PM	KEYNOTE		
12:10 PM – 12:40 PM	FORUM WRAP-UP		

DETAILED SCHEDULE

THURSDAY, 7 NOVEMBER	
3:00 PM – 6:00 PM REGISTRATION	GRAND BALLROOM FOYERS
4:30 PM – 6:30 PM NETWORKING RECEPTION	PAVILION
7:00 PM – 10:00 PM AN EVENING ON YOUR OWN (SEE WEBSITE FOR DETAILS)	
FRIDAY, 8 NOVEMBER	
7:00 AM – 4:30 PM REGISTRATION	GRAND BALLROOM FOYERS
7:15 AM – 9:00 AM BREAKFAST	GRAND BALLROOM E-F
8:00 AM – 8:10 AM OPENING REMARKS <i>Charlotte Blair & Maryam Alibeik, Forum Chairs, 2024 IEEE WIE FORUM USA EAST</i>	GRAND BALLROOM E-F
8:10 AM – 8:15 AM WELCOME REMARKS <i>Bala Prasanna, Region 1 Director, IEEE</i>	GRAND BALLROOM E-F
8:15 AM – 9:00 AM (KEYNOTE) WHY WOMEN SPEAKERS ON-STAGE AT CONFERENCES AND EVENTS WILL CHANGE THE WORLD <i>Bobbie Carlton, Founder & Speaker, Innovation Women</i>	GRAND BALLROOM E-F
9:00 AM – 9:45 AM (KEYNOTE) OWNING YOUR CAREER FOR THE FUTURE <i>Kathleen Weslock, Vice President of Human Resources, Ansys</i>	GRAND BALLROOM E-F

DETAILED SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, 8 NOVEMBER

9:45 AM – 10:15 AM

PAVILION

COFFEE BREAK & EXHIBITS

10:15 AM – 10:50 AM

CONFERENCE CENTER 2

TRACK 1: EMPOWERMENT IN ACTION

OPTIMIZING PERFORMANCE: GOAL SETTING STRATEGIES FOR INDUSTRY AND ACADEMIA

Soheli Farhana, Research Associate, Harvard University

Goal setting is a fundamental process that drives progress in both industry and academia. In industry, goal setting aligns team efforts, drives performance, and fosters innovation, while in academia, it enhances research productivity, academic success, and personal development. This presentation explores the values and performance of goal setting within these contexts, emphasizing the frameworks such as SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) and OKRs (Objectives and Key Results). I will discuss the impact of well-defined goals on organizational and individual performance, the challenges associated with goal setting, and strategies to overcome these challenges. By integrating theoretical insights with practical applications, this paper provides a comprehensive understanding of goal setting as a tool for achieving excellence in both industry and academia.

10:15 AM – 10:50 AM

CONFERENCE CENTER 4

TRACK 2: ENGINEERING THE FUTURE

PREPARING WOMEN ENGINEERS FOR GLOBAL CHALLENGES: A PATH TO POSITIVE CHANGE

Uma Balaji, Professor and Chair of Electrical and Biomedical Engineering, Fairfield University

Problem-based learning (PBL) methodology is a key resource in engineering education that engages students with real-world issues. It helps students develop leadership, communication, and teamwork skills, crucial for successful problem-solving in both technical and societal contexts. By addressing social and global challenges such as diversifying the STEM pipeline, energy usage, sustainability, and environmental impacts through the PBL approach, we foster the development of well-rounded women engineers and create a path for positive change. Opportunities to mentor under-represented K-12 students in STEM through topics like energy, sustainability, and robotics were provided to a set of interested and selected future women engineers over the last five years. Data on the outcomes indicate that this engagement allows them to demonstrate solutions to critical societal needs while preparing them to be the next generation of leaders. The positive impact on the mentees will also be presented.

10:15 AM – 10:50 AM (WORKSHOP)

MASSACHUSETTS/RHODE ISLAND

TRACK 3: NAVIGATING CAREER SUCCESS

INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP: ENHANCING SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Carolyn Matheus, Professor of Information Systems, Marist College

This interactive presentation provides attendees an overview of authentic leadership, focusing on building a diverse support network and understanding the characteristics of creative and innovative leaders. Emphasis will be placed on skills and strategies for fostering innovative thinking that can be used at the individual, team, and organizational level. Through presentation and interactive activities, attendees will gain insight into techniques for developing skills for strengthening innovative thinking, including concepts such as: exploring curiosity and enhancing association skills to create space for generating new ideas, strategically questioning to see the world from different perspectives, strengthening observing and experimenting skills by entering new environments and learning to think outside the box, and connecting dots in new ways. Strategies for nurturing creativity, as well as tips for evaluating, building, and diversifying support networks, will also be presented.

DETAILED SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, 8 NOVEMBER

10:55 AM – 11:30 AM

CONFERENCE CENTER 2

TRACK 1: EMPOWERMENT IN ACTION

BRIDGING THE CONFIDENCE GAP: STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN TO SPEAK UP AND LEAD WITH AUTHORITY

Isha Desai, Security Technical Specialist, IBM

"Courage starts with showing up and letting ourselves be seen." — Brené Brown. This insight sets the stage for our exploration of "Bridging the Confidence Gap: Strategies for Women to Speak Up and Lead with Authority." Despite progress towards gender equality, women frequently encounter barriers that hinder their ascent into leadership roles, often rooted in a pervasive confidence gap. This session aims to arm women with actionable strategies to enhance their self-assurance and communication skills, enabling them to occupy and thrive in leadership positions. Through a combination of research findings, real-world examples, and interactive discussions, participants will learn to navigate and dismantle the sociocultural and psychological barriers they face. This presentation is dedicated to empowering women to not only elevate their professional standing but also to foster environments that champion diversity and inclusion in leadership, resonating with the conference's theme of advancing technology for humanity.

10:55 AM – 11:30 AM

CONFERENCE CENTER 4

TRACK 2: ENGINEERING THE FUTURE

DATA - THE KEY TO YOUR FUTURE!

Melissa Handa, Program Director - Technical Activities, IEEE DataPort

The advancements in data analysis, AI and machine learning are accelerating at a very fast pace! Researchers need data - lots of data! - and tools to help them manage research data. IEEE DataPort is a data management platform that can help all researchers who are in need of datasets or who need to store and manage their data. This panel discussion will provide:

- information on IEEE DataPort and its capabilities
- examples of the 6500+ datasets available on IEEE DataPort
- how IEEE DataPort can provide researchers with more opportunity for citations
- specific IEEE DataPort use cases

10:55 AM – 11:30 AM

MASSACHUSETTS/RHODE ISLAND

TRACK 3: NAVIGATING CAREER SUCCESS

CHATGPT AS YOUR INTERVIEW COACH

Neeta Basantkumar, Engineering Manager, Northrop Grumman

Preparing for an interview can be daunting, but with the right tools, you can turn it into a confident and rewarding experience. "ChatGPT as Your Interview Coach: Impressing the Panel" focuses on using AI to enhance your interview preparation. This session will guide candidates through answering pivotal questions like "Why do you want this job?" and "Do you have any questions for us?" We will demonstrate how ChatGPT can help you practice and refine your responses, providing tips on how to impress both technical and behavioral interview panels. Join us to learn how AI can be your personal interview coach, helping you secure your desired role.

DETAILED SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, 8 NOVEMBER

11:35 AM – 12:10 PM (WORKSHOP)

MASSACHUSETTS/RHODE ISLAND

TRACK 1: EMPOWERMENT IN ACTION

USE AND APPLICATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS FOR PROBLEM SOLVING IN LEARNING CONTEXTS

Marie Hronik-Tupaj, Dean of STEM, Middlesex Community College

Peter Shea, Director of Professional Development, Middlesex Community College

Since the release of ChatGPT in November 2022, the use of AI has exploded with opportunities. This workshop will cover emerging uses of AI in educational contexts. We will present how AI is integrated into educational organizations, STEM curricula, and its capabilities in assisting with engineering designs and analysis. We will demonstrate AI capabilities in problem solving, particularly in the realm of electrical engineering education. Examples will be shown on general analog circuit analysis and designing circuit layouts using AI tools, including ChatGPT, open-sourced SPICE, and circuit layout software. General AI algorithms and what we can learn from this will be summarized. We will discuss how these techniques extend to other fields and ways that AI improves performance. Challenges and limitations in AI including in diversity and equity will be addressed. The presentation will provide opportunities for discussion and will be interactive. Future directions will be highlighted.

11:35 AM – 12:10 PM

CONFERENCE CENTER 4

TRACK 2: ENGINEERING THE FUTURE

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES IN CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAMWORK FOR NEW PRODUCT SUCCESS

Dianna Deeney, Coach & Consultant, Deeney Enterprises, LLC

Early concept development with a cross-functional team is crucial in new projects. Despite its importance, over 80% of average businesses poorly execute value assessments of products to customers, primarily due to inadequate teamwork. Many individuals prefer working alone, perceiving teamwork as time-consuming and less effective. However, the diverse perspectives of a cross-functional team can be a significant strength. Effective leadership can define goals and align performance metrics, but teams must also develop commonality independently. Early, fact-based research significantly influences design decisions and development success. This presentation introduces a framework to help engineers facilitate concept development and a playbook for co-working sessions. Attendees will learn to use a benefits model to link design inputs to customer experiences, prioritize inputs with the Kano model, and effectively facilitate team meetings.

11:35 AM – 12:10 PM

CONFERENCE CENTER 2

TRACK 3: NAVIGATING CAREER SUCCESS

COLLABORATIVE NEGOTIATION: STEP INTO YOUR POWER SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

Lyla Cookson, Empowerment Coach, Cookson Coaching

Despite decades of effort, women engineers continue to face significant salary disparities compared to their male counterparts. Negotiation plays a critical role in this persistent gender pay gap. This program leverages Linda Babcock's research from "Women Don't Ask" and "Ask for It" to explain the underlying reasons for the gap and introduces Robert Fisher and William Ury's collaborative negotiation strategies. Through experiential exercises, participants will enhance their negotiation power skills, such as empathy, exploration, innovation, prioritization, and decisive action. The session concludes with practical tips to avoid common negotiation pitfalls, equipping women with the confidence and skills for successful future negotiations in both professional and personal settings.

DETAILED SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, 8 NOVEMBER

12:10 PM – 1:25 PM

LUNCH

GRAND BALLROOM E-F

12:35 PM – 1:20 PM (KEYNOTE)

GRAND BALLROOM E-F

WOMEN IN STEM: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Jill Gostin, Principal Research Scientist in the Software Engineering and Architecture Division (SEAD), Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI)

We all have faced or will face challenges in our careers. We all have our stories, and we need to share them! This talk will focus on the particular challenges that women face, and how we can turn those challenges into opportunities.

1:25 PM – 2:00 PM

CONFERENCE CENTER 2

TRACK 1: EMPOWERMENT IN ACTION

MASTERING PERFORMANCE REVIEWS: A PATH TO EMPOWERMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Raman Kaur, Head of Platform, Prior Auth & Population Health, The Cigna Group

Performance reviews are essential for career growth and organizational success. This session at the 2024 IEEE WIE Forum USA East will explore strategies for both giving and receiving effective performance feedback, emphasizing how to inspire, empower, and lead through this critical process. Attendees will learn techniques to deliver constructive feedback that motivates positive progress and helps peers discover their true potential. Additionally, the session will cover methods for receiving feedback with an open mind, turning insights into actionable career advancement plans. Through interactive workshops, participants will develop new skills in communication, emotional intelligence, and feedback interpretation. By mastering the art of performance reviews, individuals can enhance their leadership capabilities and drive continuous improvement within their teams. Join us to unlock the power of effective feedback and propel your career to new heights.

1:25 PM – 2:40 PM (PANEL)

GRAND BALLROOM E-F

TRACK 2: ENGINEERING THE FUTURE

THE CAREER KALEIDOSCOPE: PERSPECTIVES ON THE UPS AND DOWNS OF PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Laila Salman, Principal Technical Specialist Engineer, Ansys Canda Ltd

Alexandra Small, Investor & Entrepreneur

Narimane Soliman, Semiconductor Design Technologist, Intel Corporation

In the ever-evolving landscape of professional development, understanding how to effectively navigate and achieve career goals is paramount. This session will delve into the art of navigating pivotal moments and making strategic pivots, illustrating how decisions shape a fulfilling career journey. The interactive discussion will enable attendees with comprehensive insights into identifying and prioritizing career goals and building supportive networks essential for professional growth. Key Learnings:

- Gain practical strategies from different generational and organizational perspectives to help chart professional paths and achieve aspirations.
- Learn how to leverage mentorship, foster resilience, and stay adaptable in an ever-changing professional landscape.

Whether you are just starting your career or are an established professional looking for new directions, this session will equip you with valuable strategies and inspiration to boldly chart your own professional path.

DETAILED SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, 8 NOVEMBER

1:25 PM – 2:00 PM

MASSACHUSETTS/RHODE ISLAND

TRACK 3: NAVIGATING CAREER SUCCESS

BALANCING CREATIVITY AND WORK-LIFE: STRATEGIES FOR FOSTERING INNOVATION IN THE TECH INDUSTRY

Kavitha Bangalore, Cybersecurity Analyst, Cleveland Clinic

As technology continues to rapidly evolve, it has become increasingly important to find a balance between work and personal life. This balance not only benefits us individually, but it also leads to greater productivity and creativity in the workplace. One way to improve work-life balance is to set clear boundaries between work and personal time. This can involve setting aside specific times for work-related tasks and making sure to disconnect during personal time. It can also involve taking breaks throughout the day to recharge and refocus. Another way to foster creativity is by stepping outside of our comfort zones and trying new things. This can involve learning a new skill, taking on a different role at work, or pursuing a hobby outside of work. By expanding our horizons, we can gain new perspectives and ideas that can be applied to our work. Finally, the session will explain how important it is to remember that creativity thrives in a supportive and collaborative environment.

2:05 PM – 2:40 PM

CONFERENCE CENTER 2

TRACK 1: EMPOWERMENT IN ACTION

FROM CONTRIBUTOR TO LEADER: NAVIGATING THE TRANSITION

Tashwin Khurana, Staff Tech Lead, Aurora Innovation

Mahima Bansod, Data Science and Analytics Lead, LogicMonitor

In the fast-paced and ever-evolving industrial environment, transitioning from an individual contributor to a managerial role represents a significant career milestone and a complex challenge. This paper provides a comprehensive guide for navigating this transition, focusing on the shift from technical duties to strategic planning and team leadership. Key areas include the development of essential leadership skills, the importance of strategic vision, and the alignment of team efforts with organizational goals. The paper also examines various managerial styles that can be powerful tools when used effectively by new managers. By addressing common pitfalls such as micromanagement, inadequate communication, and failure to delegate, the paper offers practical advice for new managers to lead their teams successfully. Emphasizing continuous learning, effective communication, and team development, this paper aims to help new managers achieve personal growth and drive organizational success.

2:00 PM – 4:45 PM

PAVILION

TRACK 3: NAVIGATING CAREER SUCCESS

CAREER FAIR & EXHIBITS

2:45 PM – 3:20 PM

CONFERENCE CENTER 2

TRACK 1: EMPOWERMENT IN ACTION

SETTING GOALS: HELPING TO EMPOWER WOMEN IN STEM THROUGH MENTORING NETWORKING AND POSITIVE ROLE MODELS

Joan DeBello, Associate Professor and Chair, Division of CS, St. John's University

The impact of positive role models and mentoring has influenced many women on their career trajectory. Through the past positive experiences, I have been able to successfully help continue to support women in STEM at various stages from middle school to graduate studies. This presentation will discuss the importance and impact of women in stem and the practices that have been implemented to help middle school students on their beginning journey as well as how college students who benefit from the Women in Science Clare Boothe Luce Program. It will also discuss the various strategies and events held to help the students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate studies to build their networks as they navigate their studies and pursue their career paths. It will discuss the impact of the successfully funded women in stem middle school workshop series helping to engage students at the young ages and show how mentoring workshops and networking has helped the various students along the way.

DETAILED SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, 8 NOVEMBER

2:45 PM – 3:20 PM

CONFERENCE CENTER 4

TRACK 2: ENGINEERING THE FUTURE

NEUROSP{AI}CY: IMPROVING CYBERSECURITY TRAINING PROGRAMS WITH AI

Tennisha Martin, Executive Director & Founder, BlackGirlsHack

Aleise McGowan, Assistant Professor, The University of Southern Mississippi

Traditional cybersecurity training programs often fail to support neurodivergent individuals due to rigid structures and lack of personalized learning. Non-Traditional Training Programs (NTPs), despite academic skepticism, offer opportunities to bridge this gap with artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML). This research investigates how AI and cybersecurity training can be adapted to better support neurodivergent individuals, outlining the benefits and challenges. The cybersecurity industry faces a talent shortage, and neurodivergent individuals, with exceptional skills in logical reasoning and problem-solving, represent an untapped resource. However, traditional methods do not accommodate their unique learning styles. NTPs provide flexible and personalized learning experiences better suited to neurodivergent needs. AI and ML can create adaptive learning systems offering personalized experiences, adjusting training pace and content, and simulating real-world scenarios.

3:25 PM – 4:10 PM (PANEL) CANCELLED

GRAND BALLROOM E-F

TRACK 1: EMPOWERMENT IN ACTION

NAVIGATING DIFFICULT WORKPLACE CONVERSATIONS: STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Moderator: Michelle Gellert, CPTM, Director of Professional Development, Rampart Communications

Panelists: Julia Andrusenko, RF Communications Engineer, Rampart Communications

Meghana Doddapaneni, DSP Engineer, Rampart Communications

Lauren Johnson, Human Resources Manager, Rampart Communication

Amy Long, Director of Administration, Rampart Communications

Mary Ann Saunders, Chief Operations Office, Rampart Communications

This panel focuses on mastering difficult workplace conversations. From addressing performance issues and providing constructive feedback to handling conflicts and broaching sensitive topics, navigating tough discussions at work is crucial for maintaining a positive and productive environment.

This panel brings together Rampart Communications experts and leaders with diverse career backgrounds to share practical strategies and real-world examples to help attendees approach challenging workplace conversations with confidence, effectiveness, and resilience.

Panelists will engage in interactive discussions and draw from personal anecdotes to share insights and methods for initiating, navigating, and resolving crucial conversations.

This panel will discuss the necessity of nurturing a workplace culture of open communication and mutual respect. It will underscore the significance of effective and empathetic communication skills to enhance teamwork, productivity, and overall employee satisfaction.

3:25 PM – 4:10 PM (WORKSHOP)

MASSACHUSETTS/RHODE ISLAND

TRACK 2: ENGINEERING THE FUTURE

STRATEGICALLY LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE (SLFTM)

Monique Ofori, Program Manager, SAIC

To excel in today's dynamic business ecosystem, women engineers need to strengthen and own their power skills. Strategically Leading from the Middle (SLFTM) is a leadership practice that can empower Women in Engineering (WIE) with innovative strategies for influencing leadership, colleagues, and staff. SLFTM is a transformational leadership approach that can assist WIE in advancing in their career to lead others in a male-dominated environment characterized by unique challenges such as the double bind, the niceness penalty, high competence thresholds, and micro-aggressions. As WIE endeavor to influence teams, advocate for themselves, and create a more inclusive work environment, mastering SLFTM power skills will empower WIE to advise senior leaders and guide teams with confidence and competence in today's engineering workforce.

DETAILED SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, 8 NOVEMBER

4:10 PM – 4:45 PM

COFFEE BREAK & EXHIBITS

PAVILION

4:50 PM – 5:35 PM (PANEL)

GRAND BALLROOM E-F

WHAT'S NEW IN CHIPS ACT AND HOW IT IS AFFECTING CT

Moderator: Russ Harrison, Managing Director | IEEE USA

Panelists: Nicholas Donofrio, Executive in Residence & Industry Advisory | Northeastern University's Center for Technology Management and Digital Leadership

Barbara Fernandez, Director, Public-Private Partnerships and Development, CONNSTEP, Inc

Paul Lavoie, Chief Manufacturing Officer, State of Connecticut

Innovation requires partnerships. For an innovation economy like ours to work, there needs to be solid partnerships between industry, academia, and government. Our session will look to strengthen your partnerships with government officials by featuring two prominent speakers from the Connecticut state government discussing how the state is capitalizing on the CHIPS Act, creating new jobs, and encouraging investments in the Nutmeg State. Join us to learn about ways to utilize government programs, work more effectively with state government officials, and what is coming next in your state.

This session isn't just for Connecticut residents. All states have programs designed to encourage innovation, job creation, and entrepreneurship. This intimate talk will help you better understand how all state governments view the CHIPS Act. You will walk away with a better appreciation for state economic initiatives and new ideas for working with your state government.

5:35 PM – 5:50 PM (CLOSING)

GRAND BALLROOM E-F

DAILY FORUM WRAP-UP

Charlotte Blair & Maryam Alibeik, Forum Chairs, 2024 IEEE WIE FORUM USA EAST

DETAILED SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, 9 NOVEMBER

7:00 AM – 10:00 AM

REGISTRATION

GRAND BALLROOM FOYERS

7:15 AM – 9:00 AM

BREAKFAST

GRAND BALLROOM E-F

7:50 AM – 8:00 AM

AI FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT, RETENTION AND ADVANCEMENT

Celia Shahnaz, 2023-2024 Women in Engineering (WIE) Committee Chair | IEEE

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a rapidly transforming industries, offering exciting career opportunities and driving innovation. IEEE WIE Day 2024 theme provides an overview of career pathways within AI. The IEEE WIE Upskill and Reskill Workshop Series aims to guide, educate and empower WIE students regarding the latest trends in research and innovation involving AI ensuring their retention in the WIE programs. The IEEE WIE Emerging Innovation and Entrepreneurship Series is designed to inspire and empower individuals in STEM fields, particularly women, by showcasing insights from industry leaders. focused on emerging technologies, innovation, and entrepreneurship and providing valuable knowledge and networking opportunities for participants looking to advance their careers in technology-driven industries using AI. IEEE WIE climate Tech big idea pitch competition is to promote and advance the growth of women-led startups in climate change using AI and relevant disciplines, such as sensor technologies.

GRAND BALLROOM E-F

8:00 AM – 8:45 AM (KEYNOTE)

FULL STEAM AHEAD: PROPELLING COMMUNITIES TO STEM SUCCESS

Donna Hylton, President & CEO, Steam Train Inc

GRAND BALLROOM E-F

8:45 AM – 9:30 AM (PANEL)

ENGINEERING WITH AI: DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION OR JUST ANOTHER TOOL?

Moderator: Charlotte Blair, Global Technical Support Leader, Ansys

Panelists: Bill Fowlkes, VP Analytics and Workflow Solutions, IP.com

Amalia Rusu, Associate Professor, Computer Science and Engineering, Fairfield University

Peter Kootsookos, Instructor, CT State Community College Middlesex

Maryam Alibeik, Assistant Professor, Temple University

As artificial intelligence continues to evolve at a rapid pace, its impact on the field of engineering is becoming increasingly profound. This panel brings together experts from academia, industry, and AI research to explore the transformative potential of AI in engineering practices. The discussion will delve into whether AI represents a truly disruptive force that will fundamentally reshape the engineering landscape, or if it's simply another powerful tool in the engineer's arsenal.

GRAND BALLROOM E-F

DETAILED SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, 9 NOVEMBER

9:35 AM – 10:10 AM (CANCELLED)

MASSACHUSETTS/RHODE ISLAND

TRACK 1: EMPOWERMENT IN ACTION

A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Amy Long, Director of Administration, Rampart Communications

Michelle Gellert, Director of Professional Development, Rampart Communications

This presentation is intended to explore a transformative approach to performance management that challenges traditional methods. By addressing common pitfalls in the performance management process, Rampart's proposed philosophy aims to enhance employee engagement and organizational effectiveness. We also highlight the critical role of integrating performance management early in the hiring process, emphasizing how this proactive approach can significantly impact the success of new hires within the organization. This talk will provide a glimpse into our findings and recommendations, offering insights into a more effective performance management strategy.

9:35 AM – 10:10 AM

CONFERENCE CENTER 2

TRACK 2: ENGINEERING THE FUTURE

HOW TO WORK WITH YOUR MARKETING COLLEAGUES

Janine Love, Technical Marketing Program Manager, Samtec

One of the ways to own your power skills is to efficiently and effectively contribute to successful product launches at your company. While the engineering part of your job is expected, one sometimes unexpected part is being asked to participate in "marketing." So, what is it that your marketing colleagues want from you? In this discussion, we talk about all the different vehicles your technical marketing team might use to communicate product and technology messaging, and how you can contribute to the effort without it becoming a huge time sink. Along the way, we will cover some of the ways to improve the types of content you send to your marketing team, with discussions on audience, purpose, organization, style, and word usage. The presentation explains the difference between available technical marketing vehicles, including white papers, webinars, contributed articles to trade press, conference papers, and product literature.

9:35 AM – 10:10 AM

CONFERENCE CENTER 4

TRACK 3: NAVIGATING CAREER SUCCESS

THE AGILE LEADER: HOW TO HARNESS AGILE METHODOLOGIES FOR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Qurat-ul-Ain Schaller, Sr. Technical Product Owner, Cisco

This talk explores the powerful intersection of Agile methodologies and personal development, demonstrating how the principles that drive successful software development can be applied to achieve personal and professional growth.

Key takeaways for attendees:

- **Understanding Agile:** We'll demystify Agile, moving beyond the jargon of sprints and stand-ups to explore its core principles: iterative progress, continuous feedback, and adaptability.
- **Agile for Self-Improvement:** Discover how to apply Agile principles to personal goals, whether it's improving fitness, learning a new skill, or enhancing productivity. Learn to break down large goals into manageable steps, embrace experimentation, and learn from setbacks.
- **Agile Leadership:** Explore how Agile fosters leadership qualities like collaboration, communication, and empowerment. We'll examine how to build high-performing teams and lead effectively in a rapidly changing environment.
- **Real-World Applications:** The talk will be packed with practical examples and actionable strategies.

DETAILED SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, 28 OCTOBER

10:15 AM – 10:50 AM (WORKSHOP) **CANCELLED**

GRAND BALLROOM E-F

TRACK 1: EMPOWERMENT IN ACTION

BUILD AND REFINE YOUR NETWORK: HOW TO TALK!

Lauren Johnson, HR Manager, Rampart Communications

Learn how to tackle soft skills in a technical way! Engineers sometimes shy away from networking because they might not know how to start. This course draws on concepts and techniques from sales and marketing to help engineers build and refine their network. The workshop examines how to use these techniques to have better conversations and to be able to “Talk” with anyone. This workshop will examine how we can use our authentic self to build connection and confidence in the ability to craft compelling stories that anyone can relate to.

10:15 AM – 10:50 AM

CONFERENCE CENTER 2

TRACK 2: ENGINEERING THE FUTURE

FUTURE-PROOFING YOUR POWER SKILLS FOR 2030

Rhonda Farrell, CEO & Transformation Strategist, Global Innovation Strategies

This paper delves into the critical issue of empowering women in the engineering field by focusing on the development of leadership skills. It addresses the unique challenges encountered by women in engineering, such as gender disparities, career barriers, imposter syndrome, and lack of representation. By nurturing leadership qualities, women engineers can overcome these obstacles and achieve success. This paper highlights the importance of leadership development in engineering careers, emphasizing the advantages it brings and the opportunities it creates for breaking through gender biases and glass ceilings. Strategies for nurturing leadership skills are discussed, including mentorship, self-confidence building, effective communication, resilience development, and continuous learning. Case studies and success stories of exemplary women leaders in engineering provide inspiration and practical insights. Additionally, the paper explores the creation of a supportive ecosystem through promoting diversity, inclusion, and equity in industry. By empowering women with leadership skills, we can cultivate a stronger, more diverse engineering workforce.

10:15 AM – 10:50 AM (MEET & GREET)

MASSACHUSETTS/RHODE ISLAND

TRACK 3: NAVIGATING CAREER SUCCESS

IEEE WOMEN IN ENGINEERING (WIE) NETWORKING EVENT

Anisha Apte, Region 1 Coordinator, IEEE Women in Engineering

Maryam Alibeik, Region 2 Coordinator, IEEE Women in Engineering

Alicia Tomaszewski, Sr. Manager, IEEE Women in Engineering

Come and chat with the WIE Committee Chair; WIE Regional Coordinators; local WIE Affinity Group Chairs and many other WIE members. During this time, take a break, enjoy dessert, participate in some games, and learn about the new opportunities for WIE Affinity Groups while attending this casual networking event.

“WIE” would love to get to know you!

10:55 AM – 11:30 AM (MEET & GREET)

PAVILION

TRACK 1: EMPOWERMENT IN ACTION

IEEE MICROWAVE THEORY AND TECHNOLOGY SOCIETY (MTTS) NETWORKING EVENT

Amanda Scacchitti

10:55 AM – 11:30 AM

PAVILION

COFFEE BREAK

DETAILED SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, 9 NOVEMBER

11:35 AM – 12:10 PM (KEYNOTE)

GRAND BALLROOM E-F

NONTRADITIONAL POWER SKILLS

Nita Patel, Vice President of Engineering, Otis

When you think of power tools for women, what comes to mind? I think of confidence, resilience, courage -- wonderful and grand ideas that seem somehow, well, grand, wonderful and impossible. In this talk, you'll hear my perspective on power tools that embraces my sense of the practical, daily elements of being human. From being unspectacular to knowing nothing, these concepts will hopefully provide a new and possible set of power tools with which we can continue to change the world.

12:10 PM – 12:40 PM

GRAND BALLROOM E-F

FORUM WRAP-UP & CLOSING REMARKS

Charlotte Blair & Maryam Alibeik, Forum Chairs, 2024 IEEE WIE FORUM USA EAST

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FORUM KEYNOTES



BOBBIE CARLTON

Founder, Innovation Women

Bobbie Carlton is the founder of Carlton PR & Marketing, Innovation Nights and Innovation Women, or, as she calls them, the day job, the night job and the dream job. Carlton is an entertaining, tell-it-like-it-is speaker who speaks extensively (and passionately) about public speaking and how it can be the driving force behind career growth and business success. She's a TEDx speaker; an entertaining startup event host; she's spoken at the United Nations; she's shared the stage with storytelling legend (and NPR's Snap Judgment host) Glynn Washington; and she's been on the main stage for some of the world's best-known conferences for technical and professional women. Carlton has been featured on CBS News, in the Wall Street Journal, Boston Globe, USA Today and other major media. She was previously the head of global PR at two different enterprise software companies and the head of marketing for a brand devoted to providing positive role models for preteen girls. She's inspired thousands of technical, entrepreneurial and executive women to take control of their own speaking careers and has worked with event managers around the world to deliver diverse and inclusive events.



JILL GOSTIN

Jill Gostin, Principal Research Scientist in the Software Engineering and Architecture Division (SEAD), Georgia Tech Research Institute's (GTRI)

Jill I. Gostin is a Principal Research Scientist in the Software Engineering and Architecture Division (SEAD) of Georgia Tech Research Institute's (GTRI) Sensors and Electromagnetic Applications Lab. She is currently the Systems Engineering, Integration, and Test Lead in SEAD. Previously she served as the Deputy Director for the Information and Communications Lab. She has worked at GTRI since 1985, including 12 years of part-time work as needed. Her work has focused on systems engineering, open architectures, algorithm assessment, and software testing and evaluation for sensor systems. In 2016 she was named the Georgia Women in Technology Woman of the Year, which recognizes women technology executives in the state of Georgia (USA) for their accomplishments as leaders in business, as visionaries of technology, and as women who make a difference in their community.

Ms. Gostin was the IEEE Vice President (VP), Member and Geographic Activities (MGA) in 2023, chairing the IEEE MGA Board. She is currently serving as the Past Chair of the IEEE MGA Board and is a Past IEEE Region 3 Director. Her IEEE service has also included multiple roles across IEEE including on the Boards of Governors of the Computer Society and the Aerospace and Electronic Systems Society, and in several leadership roles on the Sensors Council.

She received her BA in Mathematics magna cum laude from Greenville College and her MS in Applied Mathematics from the Georgia Institute of Technology. Ms. Gostin is a Senior Member of IEEE and a member of the Eta Kappa Nu Honor Society.

FORUM KEYNOTES



DONNA HYLTON

President, Steam Train Inc

Donna Hylton, a dedicated educator and community leader, has devoted over three decades to service. She retired as Professor Emerita from Middlesex Community College in 2022, after a 25-year tenure. During her time at the college, Donna held the positions of Professor and Program Coordinator for various IT degrees. Her contributions extended beyond the classroom: she founded the Technology Center and established the Computer Club at MxCC, both aimed at nurturing student success.

In 2002, Donna initiated Adventures in Learning, a free summer program for the community. Over the years, this program has evolved into the STEM GEMS Camp which introduces children to the fascinating world of STEM. She continues to lead this initiative. In 2017, Donna took a sabbatical from MxCC to address the underrepresentation of women, girls, and people of color in STEM fields. This led to the creation of STEAM Train, a non-profit organization committed to guiding under-resourced and underrepresented populations towards careers in STEM. She currently serves as its President/CEO. STEAM Train has led many initiatives that bring STEM to communities and schools in the State of Connecticut. The organization has received several prestigious awards for its outstanding work and Donna is honored to see the impact of her vision in our state.

Donna holds an undergraduate degree in Administrative Computer Systems from Hofstra University, a master's degree in computer information technology from Central Connecticut State University, and a second master's degree in professional counseling from Liberty University. She began her IT career in New York City, transitioning to Connecticut where she worked as a computer programmer for twelve years before embarking on her teaching career in 1997. She serves on the board of the Midstate Chamber of Commerce and the Technology and Education committee. She is also a member of the business and industry advisory board member of ReadyCT's Bulkeley High School Computer Science Pathway.

Donna and her husband, Paul Hylton, serve as pastors of Shiloh Christian Church, Middletown. They have four daughters, three granddaughters, and three sons-in-law.



NITA PATEL

Vice President, Engineering, Otis

Nita Patel is Vice President, Engineering at Otis's lead design center in Farmington, Connecticut where she is leading global engineering design and development. As a volunteer leader, Nita is immediate past president of the IEEE Computer Society. She has served in other IEEE roles such as Director of the IEEE Foundation, Vice President for IEEE-USA, and past international chair of IEEE Women in Engineering during which she founded the International Leadership Conference and launched the local ILS summits.

Outside of IEEE, Nita is an active leader within Toastmasters International and the United States Chess Federation. Nita received her MS Computer Engineering, BS Electrical Engineering, and BS Mathematics from Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

FORUM KEYNOTES

**KATHLEEN WESLOCK**

Vice President of Human Resources, Ansys

Kathleen Weslock is an experienced global HR executive with a career background that has involved extensive collaboration with executive leadership as a trusted advisor in achieving current and future business goals. With broad global HR and legal acumen, she provides an expanded viewpoint to manage large-scale business change and transformation. Kathleen offers a deep background in law, M&A, CEO succession, executive compensation, AI/ML and organizational restructuring. She is the CEO and Founder of KDOG HR Consulting in addition to a varied and extensive HR corporate career.

With more than 35 years of progressive leadership experience, Kathleen has overseen many transformations of HR departments as well as corporations, saving millions through strategic global restructuring, benefit and compensation planning and a keen sense for business modeling. She is a recognized leading expert in global HR and has earned her a reputation as a proactive, progressive, and innovative leader. She feels honored to have worked for women who have broken through the glass ceiling and has been active in D&I/ESG for her entire career.

Kathleen began her career in HR with GTE, now Verizon. She then attained her law degree and started her career in professional services, first joining Mercer Human Resources Consulting as Principal of International Practice, where she guided F500 companies through global mergers and acquisitions. Her specialty was global compensation development as well as all global aspects of HR. From there, she moved to Lehman Brothers, then Shearman & Sterling, and finally Deloitte.

Kathleen holds both a JD from Pace University School of Law, a master's from Cornell University and a bachelor's from Hood College. She is active in a multitude of professional Boards and Organizations, including serving as a Trustee at Hood College and was a member of the Dean's Advisory Council for the ILR School at Cornell. She was recently honored by HRO Today as the CHRO of the Year and a winner of the Groat Award from Cornell University for her distinguished career and excellence within the world of work and human resources.

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Otis Elevator Company moves 2.3 billion people a day and maintains more than ~2.3 million customer units worldwide, the industry's largest portfolio. We can be found in many of the world's most recognizable buildings as well as the busiest transportation hubs and retail centers. Otis is 71,000 people strong, committed to meeting the diverse needs of our customers. We are excited to be a part of WIE Forum East 2024! We are committed to creating an inclusive culture that encourages and celebrates the diversity required to innovate, connect and thrive in a taller, faster and smarter world. Women currently represent more than one-third of Otis executives globally and 40 percent in the United States. Otis has pledged to realize parity of 50 percent women executives globally by 2030.

FORUM SPEAKERS

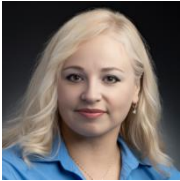


MARYAM ALIBEIK

Assistant Professor, Temple University

Dr. Maryam Alibeik got her bachelors, master's and PhD in Electrical Engineering from Purdue University (Purdue school of Engineering and Technology). She got her PhD degree in July 2021 and started as an Assistant Professor in Electrical and Computer Engineering Department at Temple University, Philadelphia.

Dr. Alibeik is currently an active member of IEEE Philadelphia section and is serving as student activity advisor at IEEE chapter in Temple University.



JULIA ANDRUSENKO

RF Communications Engineer, Rampart Communications

Julia Andrusenko, a seasoned Senior Communications Engineer at Rampart Communications, has over two decades of expertise in the field. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in electrical engineering from Drexel University. Before joining Rampart, she served as a Senior Communications and Chief Engineer of the Mission Critical Communications group at the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (JHU/APL). Julia's expertise includes communications theory, wireless networking, satellite communications, Radio Frequency (RF) propagation prediction, communications systems vulnerability, computer simulation of communications systems, evolutionary computation, genetic algorithms/programming, MIMO, and millimeter wave technologies.

She has co-authored two books based on her extensive experience developing electronic warfare methodologies for advanced commercial communications systems and military data links: "Wireless Internetworking: Understanding Internetworking Challenges" (Wiley/IEEE Press) and "Cognitive Electronic Warfare: An Artificial Intelligence Approach" (Artech House).

Julia is a senior member of IEEE, a member of the IEEE Communications Society, and a voting Member of the IEEE 1900.5 Working Group (WG) on Policy Language and Architectures for Managing Cognitive Radio for Dynamic Spectrum Access Applications. She frequently participates in conferences as a session chair, technical reviewer, speaker, and panelist. Additionally, Julia has played a pivotal role on the steering committee for the annual IEEE/APL 5G for First Responder and Tactical Networks Technologies workshops.



ANISHA APTE

Sr. Design Engineer, Synergy Microwave Corporation

Dr. Anisha M. Apte, IEEE Senior Member, graduated in Instrumentation and Control Engineering from The Savitribai Phule University of Pune, College of Engineering Pravaranagar, India; MSEE (Master of Electrical Engineering) from NJIT (New Jersey Institute of Technology) NJ, USA; and Doctorate (Dr.-Ing.) from BTU (Brandenburg Technical University) Cottbus, Germany.

Dr. Apte is a dedicated IEEE volunteer, currently serving as the IEEE Women In Engineering Region-1 (WIE R1) Coordinator, IEEE AP-S R1-R6 CAC (Antennas and Propagation Chapter Activity Committee) coordinator, Member of the IEEE AP-S COPE and SIGHT Committees, Vice-Chair-2 and Newsletter Editor of the IEEE North Jersey Section, Co-Chair of IEEE North Jersey Section SIGHT Group, Vice-Chair of the IEEE North Jersey Section MTT/AP Chapter, and has served as the Editor of the IEEE AP-S Magazine COPE Column. She is an elected AdCom member for the term 2022-2024 of the IEEE AP-S.

She is the recipient of the 2021 and 2012 IEEE Region-1 awards – Support for IEEE Mission Award for Outstanding Contributions to the IEEE North Jersey Section.

FORUM SPEAKERS

**UMA BALAJI**

Professor and Chair of Electrical and Biomedical Engineering, Fairfield University

Dr. Uma Balaji is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Electrical and Biomedical Engineering Department at Fairfield University. She brings extensive experience in developing STEM education programs focused on robotics and sustainability for underserved communities. As a faculty mentor in the Broadening Access to Science Education (BASE) Camp, she guided female high school students, with support from women undergraduate counselors, in building an obstacle-avoiding robot using basic components—all within just one week. Collaborating with local teachers and administrators, she continues to engage K-12 students in hands-on, sustainability-focused STEM activities, encouraging them to embrace sustainable practices. She also works with youth from local after-school programs to foster a STEM pipeline, helping cultivate the next generation of innovators. In recognition of her impactful work, Dr. Balaji received the 2023 IEEE Region 1 Outstanding Teaching Award in an IEEE area of interest (Pre-University or College), as well as the Jeffrey P. von Arx, S.J. Award for Excellence in Community Engagement from Fairfield University in 2024.

**KAVITHA BANGALORE**

Cybersecurity Analyst, Cleveland Clinic

Kavitha Bangalore is a seasoned professional with over 20 years of expertise in developing, integrating, and managing IT, Cloud, and Cybersecurity projects across India, Singapore, and the US. Currently serving as a Cybersecurity Analyst at a leading healthcare organization. She has earned numerous industry certifications in IT, Agile, Cybersecurity, ITIL Process, and Six Sigma (Black Belt). Her dedication and impact have been recognized through awards, including the Action-Oriented, Customer-Focused Employee Award and a Certificate of Acknowledgement for Innovation.

She holds a bachelor's degree in engineering (Instrumentation Technology) and a Master's in IT, alongside certifications from prestigious institutions like UT Austin, MIT Sloan, and Ohio State University. She is an active senior member of IEEE and is affiliated with organizations like PMI, WiCys, ISSA, and serves as a Google Women Tech Maker Ambassador.

Beyond her professional success, she is a devoted wife and mother of two daughters, as well as a caregiver to a lively puppy. She has mastered the art of maintaining a healthy work-life balance, excelling in her career while making time for her family, personal growth, and community contributions. Her ability to balance a demanding career with family life showcases her dedication to both her professional and personal goals.

Passionate about advancing Women in Technology, sustainability, and cultural initiatives, she frequently shares her insights as a speaker at conferences focused on Women in Tech and Cybersecurity. Her LinkedIn profile can be found at www.linkedin.com/in/kavithabli.

FORUM SPEAKERS



MAHIMA BANSOD

Data Science and Analytics Lead, LogicMonitor

Mahima Bansod is an accomplished data science and analytics expert with 9+ years of experience in the technology industry. Currently, Mahima serves as the Data Science and Analytics Manager at LogicMonitor, where she leads a team focused on leveraging advanced analytics to drive strategic decision-making and operational efficiency.

She earned her master's in information systems at Illinois Institute of Technology Chicago. Her research interests are in Machine Learning and Natural Language Processing. Previously, Mahima has held multiple roles at Salesforce and Siemens, where she spearheaded initiatives that improved business intelligence capabilities and optimized data workflows. In her latest position, Mahima plays a crucial role in shaping data engineering and data science efforts for driving growth. As a seasoned professional, she is committed to sharing insights on data-driven transformation, with a particular focus on leveraging data science to solve complex business challenges.

Mahima is extremely passionate about encouraging, mentoring, and empowering people, especially women and students, in the world of technology. She is also an active member of the tech community, serving on the leadership team for Society of Women Engineers – Golden Gate Section.

She is passionate about empowering the next generation of women engineers and technologists through mentorship and community engagement.

In her spare time, Mahima enjoys exploring new trends in AI and machine learning and stays actively involved in community-driven tech initiatives.



NEETA BASANTKUMAR

Engineering Manager, Northrop Grumman

Neeta Basantkumar is currently an Antenna Test Engineering Manager at Northrop Grumman. She was previously a Process Engineering Manager at Northrop Grumman's Advanced Technology Laboratories (ATL). Prior to that, she supported the trusted foundry as a Process Integration Engineer. She also worked at Lockheed Martin as a Research Engineer, and L3 Harris as a Chief Systems Engineer.

She served as a volunteer with IEEE WIE Forum (East) the previous years and was the co-chair in 2017 & 2019. Neeta is excited to continue supporting this forum as an advisor.

Neeta has a professional degree from Columbia University, a master's from University of Minnesota, and bachelor's from Widener University all in electrical engineering. You can connect with her on <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ateenjar/>



CHARLOTTE BLAIR

Global Technical Support Leader | Ansys

Charlotte Blair, PhD. is the Global Technical Support Manager for Electronic and Electromagnetic simulation tools for ANSYS Inc. She received her BS in Electrical Engineering at Rutgers-College of Engineering and her MS and Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering from New Jersey Institute of Technology. She has supported electromagnetics simulations using industry-known tools for over 25 years. Her real-world experience extends from the design of laser diode transmit modules for Lytel/Lockheed to design of filters for wireless communications applications at Celwave/RFS. She is a professional, self-motivated team player committed to excellence with hands-on RF, microwave, and laser-optic experience, strong field service, customer service, project management and communication skills.

Charlotte also serves as the IEEE Connecticut Section Chair for the local Microwave Theory and Techniques Society (MTT-S), Antennas and Propagation Society (APS) and WIE Chapters.

FORUM SPEAKERS



LYLA COOKSON

Empowerment Coach, Cookson Coaching

Lyla Cookson is an experienced engineer turned mindset coach, with a deep-rooted passion for empowering women in engineering. After earning her B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Boston University, Lyla spent five years living in Japan, where she worked for Sanyo Electric designing cutting-edge semiconductor circuits. Her time in the fast-paced world of tech ignited a fascination with the power of mindset and how it influences both career and personal success.

Driven by her belief in the transformative power of a strong mental foundation, Lyla transitioned from engineering to coaching, where she now specializes in helping women in STEM break through mental barriers and achieve their full potential. Her approach emphasizes the critical role that mindset plays in every aspect of success, encapsulated by her signature quote: “At the root of all success is a healthy mindset.”

Lyla’s work is grounded in practical, actionable strategies. She offers a foundational mental fitness course designed to help individuals build and maintain the mental resilience necessary to thrive in high-pressure environments. Lyla also guides women in engineering to develop the confidence and mental clarity needed to navigate their careers and personal growth with success and balance. With her unique blend of technical expertise and mindset coaching, Lyla brings a refreshing and holistic perspective to her work, making her a sought-after speaker and mentor in the STEM community.

JOAN DEBELLO

Associate Professor and Chair, Division of CS | St. John's University

Dr. DeBello is currently a Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science and Chair for the Division of Computer Science, Mathematics and Science for the Lesley H. and William L. Collin’s College of Professional Studies. She has received her Doctorate from Columbia University. While at St. John’s University, she has taught various mathematics courses including College Algebra, Statistics and Calculus and various programming courses in Java and C++. She is also active in grant writing and was a former CTL fellow. Additionally, she moderates the St. John’s University ACM Student Chapter and is a board member and the vice chairperson for the NY Metro ACM Chapter. She previously served as the chair and also the chair of Education for the ACM New York Metro Chapter. She is also the faculty coordinator for the Women in Science Clare Boothe Luce Program at St. John’s. Her various research areas include increasing the number of women and under-represented in computer science and mathematics, Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Mathematics in Sports, computer science and cyber security education, computational mathematics and game and GUI programming.



DIANNA DEENEY

Coach & Consultant, CEO | Deeney Enterprises, LLC

Dianna Deeney is a quality advocate for product development with over 25 years of experience in manufacturing. Through Deeney Enterprises, LLC and her signature program, Quality During Design, she empowers product design managers and engineers to create exceptional products.

Dianna helps teams integrate quality principles into their design process, fostering early collaboration that leads to fewer design rework loops and reduced overall costs. Her passion for education bridges the gap between design and quality through the Quality During Design platform, offering:

- *The Quality During Design Podcast*: Engaging discussions on topics like FMEA, design for manufacturability and quality, and cross-functional teamwork.
- QualityDuringDesign.com: Informative resources on applying quality principles in product design.
- *Online Courses*: Practical training on Udemy, like “FMEA in Practice: From Plan to Risk-Based Thinking”.

Dianna’s commitment to excellence extends to co-hosting the *Speaking of Reliability Podcast* and contributing to industry publications like *Quality Disrupted*. She is an IEEE senior engineer, a senior quality professional, and an active member of ASQ holding certificates as a CQE, CRE, CQA, and CMQ/OE.

Join Dianna for a thought-provoking session.

FORUM SPEAKERS



ISHA DESAI

Security Technical Specialist, IBM

Isha Desai works as a Security Technical Specialist at IBM and is passionate about empowering individuals to unlock their potential using neuroscientific techniques. As a Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) practitioner and enthusiast, she brings a variety of tools to help people reprogram their subconscious minds, fostering resilience and personal growth. With a unique background in both technology and mental health, Isha blends her technology expertise with psychological strategies, offering a fresh perspective on personal and professional development. She's led workshops that inspire women to speak up, lead with confidence, and manifest the careers they've always dreamed of. Isha believes that many people don't reach their full potential, not because they lack ability, but because they haven't yet tapped into their own power and knowledge. Her workshops guide participants through this journey, helping them realize what they're truly capable of.

Through her own transformation—by studying and practicing these techniques—she's seen firsthand the incredible impact it can have, and she's committed to sharing this with women in the community, encouraging them to step into leadership roles with authority and confidence.



MEGHANA DODDAPANENI

DSP Engineer | Rampart Communications

Meghana Doddapaneni is a driven DSP Research Engineer at Rampart Communications, where she applies her passion for signal processing to design and advance cutting-edge technologies. Meghana's technical leadership has been instrumental in several projects, most notably a demonstration of Rampart's technology in satcom systems, showcasing her ability to translate research into real-world impact.

With a strong academic foundation including dual B.S. degrees in Electrical Engineering and Mathematics from the University of Maryland and an M.S. in Electrical Engineering (expected December 2024) from Johns Hopkins University, Meghana is poised to continue making significant contributions to the field.

Prior to joining Rampart, Meghana gained valuable experience as an FPGA engineer for the Naval Research Laboratory and the Naval Observatory. Her commitment to inspiring and empowering women in engineering is evident through her continued participation as a panelist at the IEEE WIE Forum USA East.

Outside of work, Meghana enjoys staying active through running, paddleboarding, and kayaking, reflecting her balanced and dynamic approach to life.



NICHOLAS DONOFRIO

Executive in Residence and Industry Advisory | Northeastern University's Center for Technology Management and Digital Leadership

Nicholas M. Donofrio is an Executive in Residence and Industry Advisory at Northeastern University's Center for Technology Management and Digital Leadership. He serves as Chairman of the Board of Quantexa, London England and Lead Director of the Board of Sproxil Corporation, Cambridge MA. He is a member of the board of HYPR Corp (Lead Director), Security Score Card, New York Genome Institute, Syracuse University (Life Trustee), National Association of Corporate Directors, Medici Group and Ravenpod Inc. He was recently named as a founding Trustee for the USA National Semiconductor Technology Center. He currently serves as an advisor to Epirus, Tera Group, Bloom Value, X994, Grey Market Labs, Mitchells, Cultiv Ventures and StarVest Partners.

Mr. Donofrio is focused sharply on advancing education, employment and career opportunities for underrepresented minorities and women.

FORUM SPEAKERS



SOHELI FARHANA

Research Associate, Harvard University

Dr. Soheli Farhana lends her expertise to the prestigious Harvard University, where she continues to push the boundaries of nanoelectronics and semiconductor devices. Her journey, however, began long before, traversing through esteemed institutions and ground-breaking research. Prior to her tenure at Harvard, Dr. Farhana served as an Assistant Professor at the University of Kuala Lumpur, imparting her knowledge and passion for two transformative years. Before that, she dedicated herself to the pursuit of innovation as a postdoctoral fellow, developing cutting-edge Nano sensors that hold the potential to revolutionize various industries. Dr. Farhana's academic prowess was recognized early on when she was awarded the coveted gold medal and the prestigious Best PhD Award in 2016 for her pioneering research on Carbon Nanotube Field Effect Transistors. This ground-breaking work set the stage for her future achievements and solidified her position as a thought leader in the field. Beyond her professional accomplishments, Dr. Farhana's commitment to service and humanitarian causes is truly inspiring. With a deep-rooted belief in the power of education to transform lives, she dedicates her time to volunteering and supporting initiatives that empower communities through knowledge and empowerment. For over a decade, Dr. Farhana has been an active member of the IEEE, contributing her expertise and vision to this esteemed professional organization.



RHONDA FARRELL

CEO & Transformation Strategist, Global Innovation Strategies

Dr. Rhonda Farrell is a transformation consultant and seasoned executive advisor with a proven track record in driving impactful change and strategic growth for organizations. Extensive experience spanning digital transformations, aligning to CIO, CTO, CDO, and CISO enterprise initiatives, and managing complex business and technical projects, and skilled in identifying strategic gaps and re-engineering organizations to maximize capabilities.

In addition to technical expertise, specializations include organizational development, strategic communication, change management, human capital optimization, enterprise transformation, organizational development, process improvement, cybersecurity, AI, and innovation, offering a unique perspective that combines technical expertise with a deep understanding of business dynamics. As a Baltimore-based veteran who proudly served in the US Marine Corps, advisory and professional services are approached with discipline, resilience, and a strong mission focus, consistently delivering value, growth, and sustainable operational efficiencies. Core values include service, excellence, and integrity, as well as the values instilled during military service—honor, courage, and commitment, and when coupled with strategic vision and leadership capabilities, allow navigation of complex challenges and driving of transformational change efficiently and effectively for agencies, customers, and clients. Successfully led numerous high-stakes projects and initiatives, consistently delivering measurable results that align strategically and mission-wise with organizational goals.

If you or your organization are navigating the complexities of transformational change and desire to unlock your organization's full potential, I would be honored to work with you. Let's embark on a journey of transformation and growth together!

FORUM SPEAKERS



BARBARA FERNANDEZ

Director, Public-Private Partnerships and Development, CONNSTEP, Inc

Barbara utilizes her wealth of experience to drive the growth of CONNSTEP. She cultivates and maximizes relationships with key stakeholders and existing funders while also identifying new potential partners to broaden the scope and reach of CONNSTEP services. Barbara works closely with the senior management team, playing a pivotal role in enhancing and streamlining our manufacturing supply chain ecosystem. Additionally, she spearheads efforts to secure additional funding for our MEP center and fosters strategic partnerships aligned with CONNSTEP's mission and vision.

Barbara has an extensive background collaborating with a diverse range of stakeholders, including private and public entities such as federal and state agencies, other NIST MEPs across the United States, quasi-public organizations, foundations, national labs, federally funded research development centers, workforce boards, academic institutions, and regional economic development organizations. Her strategic capability and industry knowledge add significant value to all her engagements, ensuring a focused and impactful approach to achieving shared goals.

Barbara has a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics/Multicultural Studies from Trinity College, an MBA from The University of Connecticut, and has completed Executive Development programs at Northwestern University Kellogg School of Management and Harvard Business School.

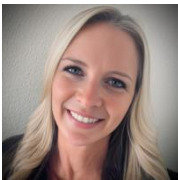


BILL FOWLKES

VP Analytics and Workflow Solutions | IP.com

Dr. William Fowlkes works with IP.com, a software and services company that provides innovation solutions for the Intellectual Property and engineering communities. Prior to that, Dr. Fowlkes worked for the Eastman Kodak Company as an Intellectual Property technology leader supporting Kodak's patent related activities from IP generation to value extraction. He is an inventor on 32 U.S. patents. As the Advanced Development Leader of the New Printing Systems Laboratory at Kodak, he was responsible for the development of high-quality color electrophotographic printers, inkjet printers and thermal printers.

Bill is a certified practitioner of TRIZ and a Six Sigma Black Belt. He is also an expert at Taguchi Methods for Robust Design, and has taught TRIZ, Robust Design, and applied statistics to hundreds of engineers and scientists; he is also co-author of the textbook Engineering Methods for Robust Product Design, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.



MICHELLE GELLERT

CPTM, Director of Professional Development, Rampart Communications

Michelle Gellert serves as the Director of Professional Development at Rampart Communications, a role that exemplifies her dedication to servant leadership and her passion for helping others achieve their personal and professional goals. Michelle's career began in the accounting and finance industry, where she established a strong foundation for assisting and supporting others.

Before joining Rampart Communications in 2023, Michelle worked at Skyline Technology Solutions, as a Project Accountant. Her career evolved as she transitioned into a Learning and Development Professional, marking a significant shift toward her true passion for professional growth. Her expertise in this field has allowed her to make a meaningful impact through her work. She had the privilege of being a featured speaker at the Women's Network in Electronic Transactions (Wnet) Career & Leadership Summit in 2016. Additionally, Michelle has delivered numerous training programs focused on communication and leadership for many different organizations both domestically and internationally. Her commitment to fostering growth in others and ensuring it aligns with each individual's definition of success remains at the core of her professional philosophy.

FORUM SPEAKERS



MELISSA HANDA

Program Director Technical Activities, IEEE DataPort™

Melissa Handa is a Program Director within Technical Activities at the IEEE and is responsible for the strategic and operational leadership of IEEE DataPort™. Melissa has led the design, development and implementation of the platform and currently manages the platform which has over 10 million users globally.

Prior to joining the IEEE, Melissa was an Executive Director in the telecommunications industry, employed by Ericsson, Telcordia Technologies, and Bellcore.

Melissa holds a Bachelor of Science (BS) degree in Biomedical Engineering from Marquette University and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from the University of Wisconsin.



RUSS HARRISON

Managing Director, IEEE USA

As Managing Director of the IEEE-USA, Russell Harrison leads the Washington, DC office for the world's largest technical professional society, the IEEE. Prior to becoming Managing Director, Russ represented technology professionals to the US government as Director of Government Relations for IEEE-USA. He focused on numerous policy issues including autonomous vehicles, digital privacy, AI, federal research funding, export control, and immigration. In addition to directly engaging with policy makers, Russ strives to build bridges between technology professionals and politicians. During his 20-year career with IEEE, Russ has spoken at over 300 local, national, and international events about public policy and the need for technology professionals to interact with their elected leaders.

Prior to IEEE-USA, Russ represented recycling facilities and the steel industry on Capitol Hill. He has served on both the Manassas Virginia Electoral Board and Planning Commission. For his service, Russ has been named twice as Manassas Volunteer of the Year. He has a master's in public management from the University of Maryland, a B.A. in Political Science from Allegheny College.



MARIE HRONIK-TUPAJ

Dean of STEM, Middlesex Community College

Marie Hronik-Tupaj, Ph.D. is the dean of the STEM division at Middlesex Community College. She has spent fifteen years in higher education as a scientist, engineering professor, and administrator. At Middlesex, Marie develops new STEM programs, including AI incorporated curriculum, and career integrated pathways. She is a senior member of the IEEE, a professional member of IEEE-Eta Kappa Nu (HKN), and the 2021 chair of IEEE Boston.



LAUREN JOHNSON

Human Resources Manager | Rampart Communications

Lauren E. Johnson currently serves as the Human Resources Manager at Rampart Communications. She is an accomplished professional holding a Master of Science degree from Columbia University and SHRM-CP certification. With over a decade of experience in recruitment, learning development, and employee relations, Lauren possesses a profound understanding of the intricacies within the HR field. Originally hailing from New York, Lauren recently relocated to Maryland amidst the pandemic, gracefully adapting to new challenges and embracing change. As a Black American, Lauren's work is enriched by her unique perspective, drawing from her undergraduate studies in English and Africana & Latino Studies. This educational background has deepened her comprehension of cultural diversity and social dynamics.

Lauren is deeply passionate about promoting inclusivity and diversity, actively supporting equality initiatives as an open member of the LGBT community. She is dedicated to cultivating an inclusive work environment where individuals from all backgrounds can thrive. Moreover, Lauren possesses a strong ardor for teaching, firmly believing in the transformative power of education to empower individuals and drive positive change.

In her spare time, Lauren generously volunteers as a mentor and guest lecturer, sharing her expertise and insights with aspiring HR professionals. She is committed to helping others develop their skills and achieve their career goals. Beyond her professional endeavors, Lauren, a committed vegan, advocates for sustainable and ethical practices, extending her commitment to making a positive impact on the world.

With an unwavering dedication to personal growth and continuous learning, Lauren aspires to create a positive influence within the HR industry and beyond. Her multifaceted background, coupled with her passion for teaching and promoting inclusivity, positions her as an invaluable asset in any organization committed to fostering a diverse and thriving workforce.



RAMAN KAUR

Head of Platform, Prior Auth & Population Health, The Cigna Group

Ramandeep Kaur is the Senior Director of Software Engineering & Head of Platform Technology at Evernorth, A Cigna Company where she orchestrates the strategic development and management of innovative technology solutions within the healthcare sector. With her career initiation in clinical settings, Raman transitioned to technological leadership roles, leveraging her medical expertise to enhance patient care through advanced software applications.

Raman holds multiple degrees equipping her unique ability to bridge the gap between healthcare management and technological innovation. Her 12+ year tenure in the industry has been marked by roles that capitalized on her dual background, such as guiding software development & AI/ML advancement initiatives at Express Scripts and enhancing patient engagement programs while being a clinician at Hackensack University Medical Center.

Her current endeavors at The Cigna Group and multiple pending patents on a machine learning driven patient authorization process reflect Raman's commitment to leveraging artificial intelligence to streamline healthcare delivery. At the upcoming Gateway to Innovation conference, she will expand on how her clinical experience informs her application of AI in medicine, aiming to transform industry problem-solving techniques.

FORUM SPEAKERS



TASHWIN KHURANA

Staff Tech Lead, Aurora Innovation

Tashwin Khurana is a robotics engineer with over a decade of experience specializing in system design and algorithm development, primarily within the self-driving technology sector. She has held key roles at leading companies, including Uber, Aurora, and Bosch, where her expertise has significantly contributed to the development of autonomous vehicle systems. Currently, Tashwin is a Senior Staff Tech Lead at Aurora, where she focuses on advancing the company's innovations in self-driving technology.

Tashwin's career highlights include being part of the pioneering team at Uber Advanced Technologies Group (ATG) that launched the first self-driving taxi on public roads and later contributing to the rollout of self-driving trucks at Aurora Innovation. Her work is characterized by her deep technical knowledge and ability to tackle complex engineering challenges, which has made her a recognized leader in the field.

Tashwin holds a master's degree in computer science from Lehigh University, which provided a strong foundation for her technical career. Beyond her professional work, she is actively involved in the tech community, where she volunteers, mentors, and supports various initiatives in software engineering and robotics. Passionate about inspiring the next generation of engineers, Tashwin regularly offers guidance to those beginning their careers in the industry.

Known for her dedication, leadership, and community involvement, Tashwin Khurana's journey reflects a unique blend of technical excellence and a commitment to empowering others in the field of autonomous systems.



PETER KOOTSOOKOS

Instructor | CT State CC, Middlesex

Experienced engineer across many different industries: mobile application development, interactive digital television, passive sonar, condition monitoring for heavy industry, remote services, access control / intrusion detection, and automated optical inspection.

Responsible for the planning, design, development, and execution of complex engineering projects within startups and large corporate environments. Created product road maps by working with customers, senior management, and market analysts. Performed voice-of-the-customer activities to uncover and validate assumptions about product worth.

Works as a consultant on intellectual property litigation performing source code review, documentation assessment, and preparation of testifying expert reports.

Joined CT State Community College at Middlesex campus in 2022 teaching computer science and engineering courses.



PAUL LAVOIE

Chief Manufacturing Officer, State of Connecticut

Leading the charge for Connecticut's manufacturing evolution, Paul Lavoie's role as Chief Manufacturing Officer has been geared towards amplifying the sector's growth and positioning the state as a hub for offshore wind industry development. Within this capacity, he's had the privilege of chairing the Manufacturing Innovation Fund and acting as the manufacturing advocate within the Governor's Office. His team's efforts have focused on facilitating resources to propel manufacturing and strategically nurturing the offshore wind sector to new heights.

Paul's tenure at Carey Manufacturing honed critical competencies in strategic leadership and operational excellence, shaping a robust foundation for his current endeavors. Steering the sales, marketing, engineering, production, and HR departments, he cultivated an environment ripe for innovation and business development. These experiences have finely tuned his expertise in new business development and marketing communications, which I now leverage to champion Connecticut's manufacturing excellence and foster economic opportunities within the clean economy.

FORUM SPEAKERS



AMY LONG

Director of Administration | Rampart Communications

Amy Long is currently serving as the Director of Administration at Rampart Communications, Inc. Her multifaceted role encompasses HR, Executive Assistance, and Office Management, ensuring smooth operations across the organization. With a passion for fostering growth, Amy takes particular interest in her Leadership Development responsibilities. She has shared her insights at the Women's Leadership Forum in Annapolis and, in collaboration with Rampart's CEO, has facilitated leadership and interpersonal communication training at the Anne Arundel County Police Academy. Amy's dedication to empowering others extends beyond Rampart, as she actively engages in Organizational Development Consulting with businesses in the Baltimore area.



JANINE LOVE

Technical Marketing Program Manager | Samtec

Janine Sullivan Love currently serves as Technical Marketing Program Manager at Samtec. She has a strong interest in science and technology, was trained as an educator, and began working in the high-tech industry more than 20 years ago.

Previously, she was Editor/Publisher of Signal Integrity Journal; Event Director at Horizon House Publications, Inc.; and Technical Program Director, DesignCon and ARM TechCon, at UBM LLC. She has also held numerous editorial positions including editor in chief of Test & Measurement World; site editor for EETimes' RF & Microwave Designline and Memory Designline; and senior editor at EDN. She edited the book World Class Designs: RF Front End and occasionally teaches at a local community college. Janine founded Writing Solutions LLC in 1998 and ran it as a successful freelance technical writing and marketing business for 13 years before returning to work directly in publishing and events. She holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Delaware and a master's degree from Duquesne University.



TENNISHA MARTIN

Executive Director and Founder | BlackGirlsHack

Tennisha Martin is the founder and Executive Director of BlackGirlsHack (BGH Foundation), a national cybersecurity nonprofit organization dedicated to providing education and resources to underserved communities and increasing the diversity in cyber. Tennisha has a bachelor's degree in electrical and computer engineering from Carnegie Mellon University and several master's degrees including in Cybersecurity, Digital Forensics and Business Administration from Johns Hopkins and University of Maryland. She is a doctoral student at Marymount University studying artificial intelligence applications within cybersecurity and offensive security. She has worked in a consulting capacity for over 15 years and is a bestselling author, award winning hacker, and an advocate for diversity.

FORUM SPEAKERS



CAROLYN MATHEUS

Professor of Information Systems, Marist College

Dr. Carolyn C. Matheus is a Professor of Information Systems, co-chair of the strategic plan implementation committee, co-chair for AI in academics, and sits on the AI steering committee at Marist College. She is a member of the IEEE standard for ethical considerations in emulated empathy in autonomous and intelligent systems (affective computing/emotion AI). She previously served as Interim Dean for the School of Computer Science and Mathematics and Director of the Honors Program. She holds a PhD in Organizational Studies/Information Science with a concentration in leadership from the State University of New York at Albany and earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in Psychology.

With a deep passion for education, extensive experience in academic leadership, and a commitment to fostering DEI initiatives, she has a demonstrated track record advocating for faculty, supporting high impact practices for students, and driving the internationalization of programming. She is passionate about advancing academic programs and strategic initiatives across operating areas, has established valuable industry and community partnerships, and leads efforts that highlight interdisciplinary synergies and drive innovation in higher education.

She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in AI Literacy, technology ethics, systems analysis and design, information quality, data analytics, and leadership. She serves as an internship coordinator for technology majors, helping students build portfolios and fostering relationships with alumni and companies to facilitate internships and jobs for students. She regularly leads student research projects focusing on interdisciplinary applications of technology and ethics.

She offers seminars on leadership and innovation for the National Society of Leadership and Success and developed and led an annual community-based global learning program in which Computer Science and Spanish students collaborated to host a technology education summer camp for junior high students in the Dominican Republic. Dr. Matheus has led and served on numerous committees including Rank and Tenure, Academic Affairs, Early College High School Program (Steering Committee), Honors Council (Chair), School DEI committee (leader), Middle States (Steering Committee), Strategic Plan Projects Advisory Committee (Chair), Strategic Plan, Library Development (Chair), Internship Task Force, Common Reading Committee, Undergraduate Research Task Force, and the Core L/S Committee.



ALEISE MCGOWAN

Assistant Professor | The University of Southern Mississippi

Dr. Aleise H. McGowan is an active advocate for equitable access to educational opportunities for all persons. She joined the faculty in the School of Computing Sciences and Computer Engineering at The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) in August 2022 with a passion to promote inclusivity to broaden participation in cybersecurity. Dr. McGowan has a Ph.D. in Computer Science from the University of South Alabama and over two decades of cybersecurity and information technology work experience. She is the CISO and Executive Board member of Black Girls Hack (BGH Foundation), a national cybersecurity nonprofit organization dedicated to providing education and resources to underserved communities and increasing the diversity in cyber.

FORUM SPEAKERS



MONIQUE OFORI

Program Manager | Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC)

Monique F. Ofori is a program manager at Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), providing strategic leadership in research, development, test, and evaluation (RDT&E) technical support services for the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). She oversees critical programs for the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (OUSDR&E), specifically within the Directorate for Systems Engineering and Architecture.

A recognized expert with over two decades of experience in systems engineering, Ms. Ofori spearheads efforts to modernize DoD weapon systems by advancing modular and open systems architectures. She leads a cross-functional team working closely with the Systems Engineering Research Center, a University Affiliated Research Center with over 20 U.S. universities, tackling key challenges in Software Engineering, Digital Engineering, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Autonomous Systems, Cybersecurity, and Trusted Systems.

Throughout her career, Ms. Ofori has taken on multiple roles of increasing responsibility in the defense acquisition and intelligence communities. Her portfolio includes leading projects involving performance engineering of hardware and software systems, requirements management, capability integration across system of systems (SoS), family of systems (FoS), modeling and simulation, and risk management.

An engineer by trade, Ms. Ofori is also an avid proponent of encouraging and empowering youth and young adults to pursue STEM fields of study. She actively volunteers in community STEM programs such as the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) Pre-College Initiative, enriching educational opportunities for middle and high school students. She also plays a vital role in her community by mentoring emerging scientists and engineers and guiding them through academic and professional development as they transition from college to the workforce.



BALA PRASANNA

Director | IEEE Region 1

Mr. Bala Prasanna's professional career of over 35 years includes working in institutions like SUNY-State University of New York, AT&T and IBM in various roles in senior technical and management positions. He volunteers his time at IEEE- Region 1 as a member of the Board of Governors. He has also served as a board member at IEEE-USA during 2016-17. Mr. Prasanna is proud to be a member of IEEE HKN Honor Society.

He cherishes his time talking to students and career professionals specifically on the importance of career management skills and technology frontiers. As IEEE national speaker, he has spoken at various US and international universities and colleges on career management skills to survive and thrive in today's workplace.

His passions are photography, reading biographies and meeting people of accomplishment. He is also a regular writer for a monthly magazine in his mother tongue language Kannada on variety of topics.

Mr. Bala Prasanna is currently serving as IEEE Region 1 Director (2024-2025). He can be reached any time at bprasanna@ieee.org.



AMALIA RUSU

Associate Professor, Computer Science and Engineering, Fairfield University

Dr. Amalia Rusu is an Associate Professor of Computer Science and Engineering in the School of Engineering and Computing at Fairfield University. For six years, she directed the Applied Research Lab in Artificial Intelligence and Robotics and the Engineer-in-Residence program at Fairfield, in collaboration with a leading manufacturer of 3D Robot-Vision systems for real-time intelligent control and monitoring of industrial robots. Her outreach activities include organizing several Google Computer Science education workshops for secondary STEM teachers, partnering on community-engaged learning projects with non-profit organizations, and creating partnerships between academia, industry, and entrepreneurs. She participated in an ASAP AVANCE grant for advancing careers of women in STEM at undergraduate institutions through professional networks. Amalia is the Chair of IEEE-CT Joint Chapter of Computer; Systems, Man and Cybernetics, and Social Implications of Technology since 2013.

FORUM SPEAKERS



LAILA SALMAN

Principal Technical Specialist, Ansys Canada Ltd.

Dr. Laila Salman received the B.S. and M.S. degrees in electronics and communication engineering from Cairo University, Egypt, in 2003 and 2005, respectively, and the PhD. Degree in electromagnetic and antenna design from the University of Mississippi, USA in 2009. She also worked as a post-doctoral student at the Université de Quebec en Outaouais, Canada till 2010. Her research was on dielectric resonator antennas, wearable antennas, microwave and millimeter-wave circuits and systems, microwave imaging for early detection of breast cancer and scattering from left-handed metamaterials.

Dr. Salman joined Ansys Canada Ltd. in August 2010 as a Principal Application Engineer for High Frequency Electromagnetics. She has close to 50 academic and industrial publications on various applications. Her current expertise is mainly in high frequency RF microwave applications, antenna design, 5G & millimeter wave applications, Automotive Radar, and IoT Applications. As part of the Ansys Women in Technology Leadership team, Dr. Salman has been hosting and participating in many workshops, panel discussions and events targeting EDI&B & women empowerment in workspace.



MARY ANN SAUNDERS

Chief Operations Office, Rampart Communications

Mary Ann Saunders, Chief Operations Officer at Rampart Communications, leads a team of highly skilled engineers, driving the development of groundbreaking technology. With over a decade of experience in wireless communications for the U.S. Government, Mary Ann possesses a strong technical background in radio frequency communications and systems engineering. Before assuming her current leadership role at Rampart in 2023, she spent over 11 years at the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (JHU/APL). During her tenure at JHU/APL, Mary Ann led projects focused on the rapid development and deployment of critical communications capabilities. Her expertise also extends to building, nurturing, and leading high-performing technical teams.

Mary Ann holds a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Lehigh University and a master's in electrical and computer engineering from Johns Hopkins University, underscoring her commitment to technical excellence.



QURAT-UL-AIN SCHALLER

Sr. Technical Product Owner, Cisco

Qurat-ul-Ain Schaller is a versatile leader with extensive experience spanning multiple industries, including industrial automation, telecommunications and financial services. As Sr. Technical Product Owner within the Learning and Certifications team at Cisco, Qurat-ul-Ain emphasizes continuous improvement and collaboration, empowering teams to innovate and adapt in a fast-paced environment.

In addition to her technical career, Qurat-ul-Ain is passionate about nurturing the next generation of talent. She is actively involved in the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) and dedicates her time to volunteer, as well as leading STEM-related activities for children. A strong advocate for diversity and inclusion in technology, her global experience brings a unique perspective to her work and community engagements.

FORUM SPEAKERS



CELIA SHAHNAZ

2023-2024 Women in Engineering (WIE) Committee Chair | IEEE

Celia Shahnaz, SMIEEE, Life Fellow IEB, received Ph.D. degree from Concordia University, Canada and is currently a professor at, Department of EEE, BUET, Bangladesh since 2015. She was the winner of Canadian Common Scholarship for pursuing her Ph.D study and recipient of Bangladesh Academy of Science Gold Medal for her contributions in science and technology. The World Academy of Science (TWAS) members have elected her as a Fellow of TWAS for the advancement of science in developing countries and she is inducted as the HKN Professional Member. She has been elected as 2022 IEEE WIE Committee Chair-Elect and she is serving as the 2023-2024 IEEE WIE Committee Chair. She has been appointed as 2024, Division V Representative, IEEE TAB Award and Recognition Committee, 2024 Member, IEEE Fourier Award for Signal Processing Committee, 2024 IEEE Computer Society Awards Chair, 2024 Member, IEEE CS Election Committee, 2024 Member, IEEE Fourier Award for Signal Processing Committee, 2022-23 Member, IEEE New Initiative Committee, 2021-24 Member, IEEE History Committee, Liaison between IEEE History Committee and IEEE WIE, 2023 Member, the future of the IEEE WIE ILC Adhoc. She has served as 2021-22 Chair, IEEE SPS Women in Signal Processing, 2021-22 Liaison between IEEE SPS and IEEE WIE, 2021-22 Member, IEEE Educational Activities Board Faculty Resource Committee. She is the immediate past Chair, founder and Advisor, WIE AG and SIGHT group FLASH, IEEE Bangladesh Section, Co-founder & Chair, IEEE SPS, EMBS, IAS, RAS, SSIT Bangladesh Chapters. She is the recipient of the 2021 IEEE MGA Achievement Award, 2021 Inspiring Women in Academia Award from Bangladesh brand forum, 2019 R10 Humanitarian Activities Outstanding Volunteer Award, 2016 MGA Leadership Award 2015 WIE Inspiring Member Award, 2013 R10 WIE Professional Volunteer Award. She has more than 24 years of experience (24 years as an IEEE volunteer) in leading impactful Technical, Professional, Educational, Industrial, Women Empowerment, Humanitarian Technology, Power and Energy-related Projects at national/international levels.



PETER SHEA

Director of Professional Development, Middlesex Community College

Peter Shea, M.A is a seasoned learning professional with extensive experience in design, instruction, editing, writing, and professional development management. He is a strong advocate for immersive learning experiences and the use of learning analytics to inform effective design. For 12 years, Peter served as the Director of Professional Development at Middlesex Community College. Additionally, he has experience as a teaching assistant for an Adult Learning course at Harvard Extension School. Peter co-edited the book **Transforming Digital Learning and Assessment: A Guide to Available and Emerging Practices and Building Institutional Consensus** (Routledge, 2021) and has been presenting on AI in education since 2019.

He also manages a Facebook group for instructional designers in education, which has grown to over 20,000 members globally. In 2020, he founded the LinkedIn group "AI in Education."

FORUM SPEAKERS



ALEXANDRA SMALL

Investor & Entrepreneur

Alexandra Small works at the intersection of development economics, finance, and policy evolution, bringing a unique perspective. She previously led Investment Products for the Institutional Retirement Business at Morgan Stanley, where she managed an over \$300 billion investment platform and drove the launch of pioneering retirement investment portfolios. Her career began in sustainable and impact investing, a path that has seen her collaborate with organizations such as UN Women on initiatives that bridge the public and private sectors.

Passionate about storytelling and amplifying diverse voices, Alexandra founded a startup dedicated to this mission and public speaks on mindset shifts those open new possibilities.

Currently, Alexandra is pursuing her MBA at the Stanford Graduate School of Business (GSB), where she serves as Co-President of Women in Management, the largest club at GSB. She holds a BA in Global Affairs with Distinction, Magna Cum Laude from Yale University.



NARIMANE SOLIMAN

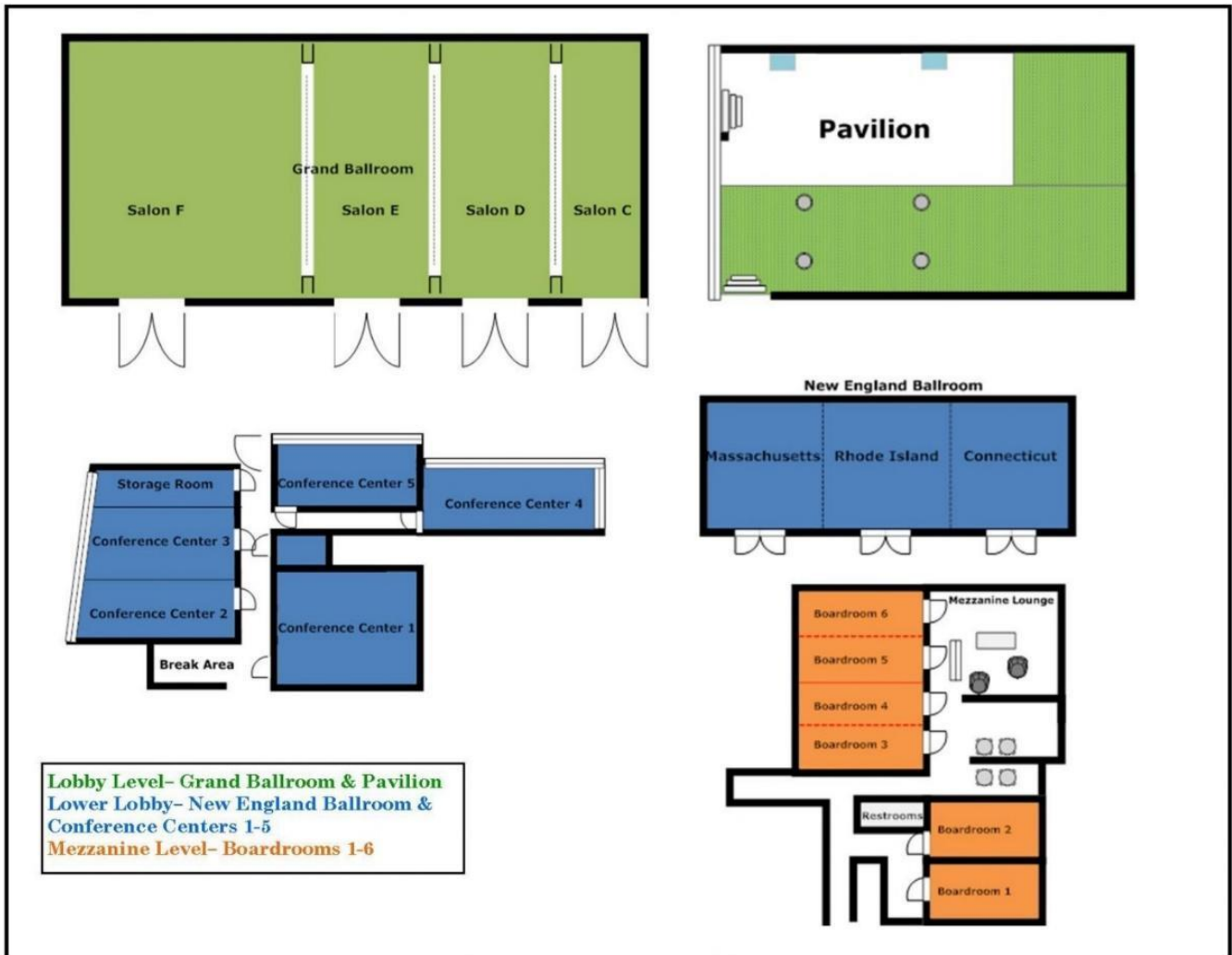
Semiconductor Design Technologist, Intel Corporation

Narimane is a Semiconductor Design Technologist. Since joining Intel in 2014, she has focused her career on advancing Intel's integrated circuit design capabilities to extend Intel's leadership in computing. She has held several engineering roles developing design methodologies and guidelines, translating electrical circuit designs into manufacturable products, and driving design and process technology optimizations. Additionally, Narimane leads the Board of Technical Women at Intel. Serving as Board Leader has provided her the opportunity to partner across Intel to drive cross-company efforts promoting diversity and inclusion, career growth and development for women.

Narimane is known for developing partnerships and constructively challenging the status quo with colleagues and senior leaders. She is inspired by Intel's mission to deliver products that benefit the lives of every person on the planet, and achievements in corporate responsibility, inclusion, and sustainability. Intel has given her great opportunities to develop as a technical leader. Narimane is excited to share her experiences and encourage women to act boldly in pursuit of their aspirations. She firmly believes that women not only have a place in technical fields, but that we must engage and encourage one another to fulfill the world's need for beneficial innovations.

Narimane earned her Master of Science degree in Computer and Electrical Engineering from the Université Pierre et Marie Curie in Paris France. She draws great strength and resilience from having lived in 4 countries, adapting to local cultures, and learning to speak 3 languages. Originally from Egypt, Narimane now lives in San Jose, California with her husband, raising their sons (ages 12 and 6 years old). She enjoys an active lifestyle (running, tennis, swimming) and exploring new places, cultures, music, and cuisines.

HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM LAYOUT



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