



For Immediate Release

ASME Foundation Announces Sonya Smith as New Board Chair and Welcomes Karen Ohland to Board

Engineering Leaders advancing Foundation's goals of equity and sustainability

NEW YORK (Oct. 16, 2023) — The ASME Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, has announced the appointment of Sonya T. Smith, Ph.D., as its new chair of the Board of Directors, and welcomes Karen Ohland as its newest board member. Smith, an ASME Fellow and a professor of mechanical engineering at Howard University, has served on the Foundation Board since August 2022, and Ohland, an ASME Fellow and an active member of the Society since 1983, is the immediate past president of the ASME Board of Governors.

“We are so fortunate that Dr. Smith will offer her extraordinary insights and leadership in the role of board chair,” said Stephanie Viola, executive director of the ASME Foundation and managing director, ASME Philanthropy. “We are equally honored that ASME’s immediate past president, Karen Ohland, will bring her invaluable wisdom and expertise to the work of the Foundation.”



In 1995, Smith was the first African American woman to earn a Ph.D. in mechanical and aerospace engineering from The University of Virginia. She joined the faculty of Howard University that same year as its first female tenured professor in the department of mechanical engineering. Smith established the Applied Fluids-Thermal Research Laboratory (@FTERLab), an interdisciplinary theoretical and computational research laboratory at Howard. Her expertise is in developing customized simulations for a variety of engineering applications, including thermal management of electronic packaging in fixed wing, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and space vehicles, and modeling and simulation of biomechanical systems. She is a past president of Sigma Xi: The Scientific Research Honor Society and is a member of the National Society of Black Engineers. She also is a member of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA), the American Meteorology Society (AMS), the American Geophysical Union (AGU), and the Society of Women Engineers (SWE). In addition, Smith serves as president of Women in Engineering Proactive Network, Inc. (WEPAN), a national organization that serves as a catalyst for change by advancing cultures of inclusion and diversity in engineering higher education and workplaces.



Ohland is the associate director for finance and operations at the Princeton University Art Museum, where she provides strategic leadership, strengthening and sustaining the process for planning and management across the Art Museum while serving in an advisory role for the museum's operations and other priorities. She also served as finance and senior administrator in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art's department of education and concerts and lectures. Prior to her career in museum administration, Ohland worked as a biomedical engineer in industry, academia, and government, most recently as research manager for Howmedica Inc., an orthopedic implant manufacturer, and Howmedica Osteonics Inc., acquired by Stryker Orthopaedics in 1998. She received a Bachelor's degree in engineering and biology from Swarthmore College and a Master's degree in anatomy from the University of Chicago.

“With these historic appointments, the Foundation board of directors reflects ASME's commitment to diversity, equity, and the highest standards for engineering excellence,” said Tom Costabile, executive director/CEO of ASME. “We're both honored and delighted that these remarkable engineers are contributing to the important mission of the ASME Foundation.”

About ASME

ASME helps the global engineering community develop solutions to real world challenges. Founded in 1880 as the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, ASME is a not-for-profit professional organization that enables collaboration, knowledge sharing, and skill development across all engineering disciplines, while promoting the vital role of the engineer in society. ASME codes and standards, publications, conferences, continuing education, and professional development programs provide a foundation for advancing technical knowledge and a safer world. In 2020, ASME formed the International Society of Interdisciplinary Engineers (ISIE) LLC, a new for-profit subsidiary to house business ventures that will bring new and innovative products, services, and technologies to the engineering community, and later established the holding company, Global Knowledge Solutions LLC. For more information, visit www.asme.org.

About the ASME Foundation

The ASME Foundation is the philanthropic arm of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, supporting an array of programs in three core pillars: engineering education, career engagement, and global development. With the goal of empowering tomorrow's technical workforce, the ASME Foundation advances equitable access both to professional opportunities and to engineering innovations that improve quality of life. For more information, visit www.asmefoundation.org.

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