



For Immediate Release

ASME Foundation Honors Industry Leaders While Raising Support for the Next Generation of Engineers at “Optimism Engineered” Gala

NEW YORK (May 8, 2025) — The ASME Foundation, the philanthropic arm of The American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), convened more than 250 industry and community leaders and STEM advocates to celebrate the promise of an empowered engineering workforce at its “Optimism Engineered: Launch the Innovators of Tomorrow” GALA 2025, held May 1 at the Mandarin Oriental, New York. Loni Love, two-time Emmy, two-time NAACP Image and three-time Gracie Award-winning host, comedian, actress, author, philanthropist, and electrical engineer, served as emcee for the evening.

“It was a truly special evening with friends and colleagues in the engineering community to celebrate the groundbreaking work of several STEM leaders and the potential of the next generation of innovators,” said ASME Executive Director/CEO Tom Costabile. “We have a lot of work to do, but also a lot to feel optimistic about.”

Highlights of the event included three award presentations and several inspirational speakers. Oscar Barton, Jr., Ph.D., dean and professor of the Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. School of Engineering at Morgan State University, an ASME Fellow and ASME Foundation board member, presented the 2024 Hoover Medal to the Honorable Aprille J. Ericsson, Ph.D., who recently served as the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Science and Technology. Established in 1929 and regarded as one of the highest honors in engineering, the Hoover Medal commemorates the civic and humanitarian achievements of engineers and is “conferred upon an engineer whose professional achievements and personal endeavors have advanced the well-being of humankind.” The medal recipient is selected by a board representing the five leading engineering organizations: ASME; the American Society of Civil Engineers; the American Institute of Chemical Engineers; the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers; and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers.



Prior to joining the Department of Defense, Ericsson worked for more than 30 years at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in various positions. She is a champion for STEM education and the future workforce. Throughout her career she has served on many academic boards for the National Academies, universities, and K-12 institutions. She has mentored many NASA interns and students, was a college professor and lead advisor for a National Society Black Engineers Jr. Chapter.

Neil Wilmshurst, the Electric Power Research Institute's chief nuclear strategy officer and managing director, EPRI Gulf, presented the ASME Foundation Excellence in Industry Award to [Ansys](#) President and CEO Ajei Gopal, Ph.D. Under his leadership, Ansys has expanded its academic programs, offering free simulation software to millions of students and discounted tools to universities worldwide. Gopal champions partnerships that bring real-world engineering experiences to students, such as the F1 in Schools initiative. He also supports inclusion in STEM, promoting mentorship within the tech community. Through these efforts, Gopal insists that Ansys plays a vital role in preparing students with the skills needed for tomorrow's engineering challenges.



ASME President Susan Ipri-Brown, a strategic initiatives manager at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, presented the ASME Foundation Next Gen Award to Jay Flores, who reaches millions of students each month through his role as a Mystery Guide on Discovery Education's Mystery Science, the most widely used K-5 science resource in the United States. Flores is also the creator and host of [It's Not Magic, It's Science!](#), an innovative brand dedicated to providing equitable access to entertaining STEM experiences. His live science shows, which feature experiments disguised as magic tricks, continue to engage and delight students in classrooms and communities nationwide. By making engineering concepts accessible in both English and Spanish, he aims to motivate the next generation of innovators while supporting bilingual education.

Gala attendees included current and prospective donors of The ASME Foundation to support its philanthropic work. The Foundation funds ASME's array of high-impact programs in education, workforce development, and innovation aimed at empowering the next generation of engineers.

"Right now, there is a critical shortage of advanced technical professionals. Meanwhile, too many promising young people are being left behind," said Stephanie Viola, executive director of the ASME Foundation and managing director of ASME Philanthropy and Programs. "To close this gap, the ASME Foundation offers a constellation of programs that motivate, inspire, and train young people from all backgrounds. With your support, we can harness the best of the American spirit – its boundless optimism and the promise of invention—to help build a better future for everyone."

Ansys was a Changemaker sponsor of this event. Innovator and Accelerator sponsors included Accuris/KKR, Berlin Rosen, Focused Wealth Management, and NVG.

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) II & III LLC, a new for-profit

subsidiary to house business ventures that will bring new and innovative products, services, and technologies to the engineering community. 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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Pictured above, left to right: Jay Flores, STEM education champion and recipient of the ASME Foundation Next Gen Award; The Honorable Aprille Ericsson, Ph.D., recipient of the 2024 Hoover Medal who recently served as the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Science and Technology; ASME Executive Director/CEO Tom Costabile; and Ansys President and CEO Ajei Gopal, Ph.D., recipient of the ASME Foundation Excellence in Industry Award.