For Immediate Release

ASME Explores Workforce Preparedness Gaps, Honors Leaders in Mechanical Engineering Education at Annual Conference

NEW YORK (April 29, 2026) —The American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) convened 200 mechanical engineering and engineering technology chairs, deans, department heads, faculty members, and industry partners from the U.S., Canada, and the UK for its Mechanical Engineering Education (MEEd) Leadership Conference, held March 29-31, at George Mason University in Arlington, VA. The annual conference addresses issues affecting the current and future state of engineering education and brings together educators, industry, government, and ASME representatives to share ideas for effective educational initiatives to prepare students for success post-graduation.

The three-day event kicked off with pre-conference sessions, featuring workshops for new department heads, associate departments heads, inclusive academic leadership, and a session detailing the engineering accreditation process. The ASME MEEd Leadership Conference itself opened with **remarks from Kenneth (Ken) S. Ball, Ph.D., P.E.**, dean of the College of Engineering and Computing at George Mason University, and ASME President **Lester Su, Ph.D.**, leading into **a keynote address from Tsu-Jae King Liu, Ph.D.**, president of the **National Academy of Engineering,** on "Creating a National Movement for Transformational Change in Engineering Education." Session topics included a first-time session with a hybrid student/faculty panel entitled "Shaping AI in ME Education: A Dialogue between Educators and Students," "Training a Workforce for 21st Century Manufacturing," and "Preparing Mechanical Engineers for the Energy-AI Transition: Curriculum, Workforce, and Partnerships."

Outside sessions, attendees engaged with representatives from exhibitors, and joined tours of three unique labs on the George Mason University campus, including:

- Prof. Xuesu Xiao's RobotiXX lab, in which researchers (XX-Men) and robots (XX-Bots) work together at the intersection of motion planning and machine learning with a specific focus on robustly deployable field robotics;
- Prof. Liling Huang's Energy Exploration (E2) Center which engages students in hands-on learning in Small Modular Reactor (SMR) technology, nuclear science, and engineering. Funded by the Virginia Clean Energy Innovation Bank and powered by the Virginia Department of Energy, visitors on this tour had a unique view into the nation's first full-scale 12-module NuScale SMR control room simulator; and
- the AFCENT Futures Lab, which conducts joint research, rapid capability development, warfighter training, and education to support the mission readiness of the Ninth Air Force. This tour was facilitated by Associate Professor Brett Josephson.

The Society also honored several leaders in mechanical engineering education at the MEEd Conference. ASME presented the 2026 ASME Edwin F. Church Medal to **N.K. Anand, Ph.D.,** Regents Professor at **Texas A&M University** and an ASME Fellow, "for championing innovation in mechanical engineering

research, advancing mechanical engineering education and leveraging breakthroughs to broaden participation of a more diverse engineering community to lead future generations in the betterment of society."

ASME also presented the 2026 ASME Ben C. Sparks Medal to **Ivana Milanovic, Ph.D.,** professor of mechanical engineering at the **University of Hartford**, "for reimagining mechanical engineering education through stimulation – rich learning, reshaping curricula to reflect real-world complexity, and mentoring a generation of engineers, with clarity, creativity, and purpose, advancing practice readiness, and inspiring lasting change across ABET accreditation programs."

In addition, ASME presented the 2026 ASME Donald N. Zwiep Innovation in Education Award to the **University of Michigan Department of Mechanical Engineering**, "for the transforming manufacturing education through multi-expert instruction, project-based learning, additive manufacturing, and digitally enabled industry-integrated systems."

*See below for captioned photos from MEEd 2026. More available upon request.**

ASME is thankful for support from its 2026 MEEd Conference planning committee members Orlando Ayala, Ph.D., Wei Chen, Ph.D., Harish Cherukuri, Ph.D., Carmen Cioc, Ph.D., Rajan Kumar, Ph.D., Michael Martin, Ph.D. Leigh McCue-Weil, Ph.D., Karim Muci-Kuchler, Ph.D., Rungan Nathan, Ph.D., and Jason Treadway, Ph.D., and staff leads Geraldine Gooding, D.Eng., Cheryl Hasan, and Kathleen Kosmoski. ASME is also grateful to the Conference's platinum sponsor the George Mason University College of Engineering and Computing, gold sponsor Quanser, and bronze sponsors Amatrol, Ansys, Mathworks, and Matrix.

Plans are already underway for the 2027 MEEd Leadership Conference and university/industry representatives are invited to submit proposals for hosting or presentations/session topics here.

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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**Four photos follow.*

Pictured above left to right: Stephanie Viola, ASME Foundation executive director and ASME managing director of philanthropy and programs; Geraldine Gooding, D.Eng.., ASME's director of engineering education and outreach; ASME MEEd 2026 Keynote Speaker Tsu-Jae King Liu, Ph.D., president of the National Academy of Engineering; and Susan Ipri-Brown, former president and current member of the ASME Board of Governors.

Pictured above left to right: Lester Su, Ph.D., president of the ASME Board of Governors, **Ellen Arruda, Ph.D.**, Tim Manganello/BorgWarner Department Chair of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Michigan, **Chinedum Okwudire, Ph.D.,** associate professor of mechanical engineering, who accepted the 2025 ASME Donald N. Zwiep Innovation in Education Award on behalf of the University of Michigan, **Ivana Milanovic Ph.D.,** professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Hartford and recipient of the 2026 ASME Ben C. Sparks Medal, **Janis Terpenny, Ph.D.,** a member of the ASME Board of Governors, **N.K. Anand, Ph.D.**, Regents Professor at Texas A&M University, an ASME Fellow, and recipient of the 2026 ASME Edwin F. Church Medal.

ASME MEEd 2026 attendees tour Prof. Liling Huang’s Energy Exploration (E2) Center at George Mason University.

Attendees interact with ASME MEEd 2026 sponsor and exhibitor Matrix.