



Weller



Bhanja

Two Electrical Engineering Professors Receive Most Valuable Mentor Awards

Tampa, Fla. (November 29, 2010) – Sanjukta Bhanja, associate professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering, and Thomas Weller, associate dean for research and professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering, were recently honored with the William R. Jones Most Valuable Mentor Awards by the Florida Education Fund's McKnight Doctoral Fellowship Program. Annually, the award provides McKnight Doctoral Fellows with the opportunity to recognize faculty who have provided exceptional mentoring toward completion of their doctoral degree.

Bhanja was nominated by Javier Pulecio her former doctoral student who is a postdoctoral research scientist at Brookhaven National Laboratory's Center for Functional Nanomaterials. In his nomination letter, Pulecio wrote that Bhanja's "... selfless approach to mentoring and intuitive research prowess offers an exceptional service for students to pursue and attain a graduate degree in cutting-edge research areas. She considers her students as fellow researchers and respects them according. Her innate gifts for mentoring and teaching are truly inspiring."

Weller was nominated by Quenton Bonds his former doctoral student and now a research scientist with NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. Bonds wrote "Professor Weller is an astute advisor who trusts his students to explore their own ideas while providing encouragement, guidance, and insight along the way. Amongst all of these responsibilities, he still carves out time for regular research meetings in which he provides guidance for each member of his 12-student research team. In addition to the technical skills and knowledge he has imparted to me during my tenure at USF, I have also become a better leader and husband as a result of watching and learning from him over the past six years. He has set a standard for me and other members of our research group to follow for years to come."

Established in 1984, the Florida Education Fund's McKnight Doctoral Fellowship Program has increased statewide the number of African Americans and Hispanic/Latino students who have been awarded the PhD in underrepresented, crucial disciplines and fields of study where minority students have not historically enrolled and completed degree programs. Since 2007, a total of 16 USF College of Engineering doctoral students have received financial support from the McKnight Doctoral Fellowship Program.

McKnight Doctoral Fellowship Program: <http://www.fefonline.org/mdf.html>

The University of South Florida is one of the nation's top 63 public research universities and one of only 25 public research universities nationwide with very high research activity that is designated as community engaged by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. USF was awarded \$394.1 million in research contracts and grants in FY 2009/2010. The university offers 232 degree programs at the undergraduate, graduate, specialist and doctoral levels, including the doctor of medicine. The USF System has a \$1.8 billion annual budget, an annual economic impact of \$3.2 billion, and serves more than 47,000 students on institutions/campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg, Sarasota-Manatee and Lakeland. USF is a member of the Big East Athletic Conference.

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