



Meet Bozenna Pasik-Duncan, a Pioneer of Women in Engineering

The 2020 IEEE Industrial Electronics Society (IES) Women in Engineering (WiE) Forum, in Singapore, was held in virtual mode on 19 October 2020, in a collaboration between the IEEE Women in IES initiative and the School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, with the support of the 2020 Annual Conference of the IEEE Industrial Electronics Society general chairs. The local organizers of the event were Prof. Huijin Fan, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, China; Prof. Wei Wang, Beihang University; and Prof. Qianwen Xu, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden. The forum included three excellent technical talks, given by Prof. Morgan Kiani, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth; Prof. Shaoping Wang, Beihang University, Beijing; and Prof. Jing Zhou, University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway. We also had the pleasure to listen to a speech, “Scholarship, Leadership, and Broader Impacts: The Power in Interdisciplinary Research,” by the immediate past chair of the IEEE Women in Engineering Committee, Prof. Bozenna Pasik-Duncan, Department of Mathematics and School of Engineering, University of Kansas, Lawrence. Prof. Pasik-Duncan (Figure 1) has a leading role in



FIGURE 1 – Prof. Bozenna Pasik-Duncan.

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the WiE initiative, and as a follow-up to her speech and the discussion we had during the forum afterward, it is my pleasure to host her in this column for a question-and-answer session.

Lucia Lo Bello: Bozenna, tell us about yourself. What is your research area in engineering?

Bozenna Pasik-Duncan: My research area is primarily in stochastic adaptive control, so, although I am a member of several IEEE Societies, my home Society is the IEEE Control Systems Society (CSS).

Lo Bello: You have been leading IEEE WiE activities for a long time now. What triggered your interest in this area?

Pasik-Duncan: Your well-attended Women in IES Forum took me back to the year of 1987, when I attended my first CSS conference after moving to

the United States from Poland. The program chair shared his observation that out of 700 technical talks, only two women presented their research. He asked me to make a change.

Lo Bello: What happened then?

Pasik-Duncan: I became cofounder of the Women in Control (WiC) Committee and the first chair of the Standing Committee on Women in Control. Today, WiC is a group of true leaders. Together, we created change. When I became the CSS vice president for membership activities, in 1999, my dream was to increase the number of female fellows and elect a female president. My dream came true. Under my leadership, the number of female CSS fellows increased by 300%, and the CSS elected a female president. Today, almost 7% of the CSS WiC fellows are female, and the current CSS president is the fourth female to hold the role.

Lo Bello: What best practice do you recommend to empower WiE?

Pasik-Duncan: I like your best practice of having technical sessions for women in the IES at the major IES technical conferences. WiC has its best practice of having lunches twice a year at major CSS conferences. During those gatherings, female plenary speakers and awardees share their stories. These practices are good way of building a professional network during the first day of a conference. With my Society experience, I became the CSS liaison to WiE and then its voting member, and after 10 years, I was elected WiE chair, overseeing more than 20,000 members and 900 Affinity Groups. I became a global citizen and a strong advocate for women.

Lo Bello: What is your perspective on future WiE activities?

Pasik-Duncan: Advancing, mentoring, advising, and sponsoring women around the world is my passion. I love celebrating their achievements. I believe that happiness can be found in celebrating others. IEEE and the IES are a part of me. It will be my privilege to join you, women in the IES. I believe that only by working together can we make a difference. There is so much that we can do for

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women in IEEE. I like to think about leadership as the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and to strive.

In conclusion, in IES, thanks to the Women in IES initiative, we are on the right track. Some of our work has been finished, while other accomplishments remain for the future. To follow our Women in IES activities, stay in touch with us on LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8609923/>).



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