

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our next issue of the year (Volume 14, Issue 2) for the *Journal of STEM Education: Innovations and Research*. Readers will find that our authors' excellent research continues and we have seven intriguing articles in this issue that describe several new approaches to improving students' learning through hands-on experiences and exposure to real-world case studies.

To begin the issue, in "iPads in the Science Laboratory: Experience in Designing and Implementing a Paperless Chemistry Laboratory Course," Tiffany Hesser integrated iPads into a general chemistry class at the University of New Haven. Through her study, Hesser found that the paperless approach lessened the environmental impact of conducting labs and students were exposed to digital laboratory techniques that are increasingly used in industry.

In "The Prospect of an 'A' in STEM Education," Michael Daugherty examines the possibility of adding an arts aspect into STEM Education. The author outlines current examples of how the arts are being incorporated into STEM and suggests that combining the fields would only improve the current STEM education system.

Marsha Ing, Wenson Fung and David Kasailus also discuss focusing more on typically 'non-STEM' skills in "The Influence of Materials Science and Engineering Undergraduate Research Experiences on Public Communication Skills." They discuss the importance of supporting future STEM professionals by developing their communication skills.

David Willis, Paul Krueger and Alice Kendrick bring us "The Influence of a Research Experiences for Undergraduates Program on Student Perceptions and Desire to Attend Graduate School." Their study evaluates an eight-week Research Experiences for Undergraduates program at Southern Methodist University to determine how undergraduate research programs influence student's perceptions of engineering research and their desire to attend graduate school.

A holistic look at a freshman engineering cohort is taken in "Freshman Engineering Retention: A Holistic Look," by Nora Beth Honken and Patricia Ralston. The authors examined a specific group of students to determine different characteristics of students who stay in engineering, as opposed to those who switch to another major or decide to leave college after a certain amount of time in engineering.

Kimberly Kendricks, Kumar Nedunuri and Anthony Arment of Central State University investigated the recruitment and retention programs for minority STEM students in "Minority Student Perceptions of the Impact of Mentoring to Enhance Academic Performance in STEM Disciplines." They discuss the structured mentoring strategies undertaken by the Benjamin Banneker Scholars Program, which has the goal of increasing the number of high performing students and also increasing retention and graduation rates of these students.

Finally, James Watters and Carmel Diezmann of Queensland University of Technology, explore the importance of acknowledging major skill shortages in STEM-based industries "Community Partnerships for Fostering student Interest and Engagement in STEM." They advocate a student-centered integrated curriculum in which students have the opportunity to become more involved and engaged with the community in which they live.

As the spring semester winds down, I hope all of our readers can look upon the last semester and see true accomplishments and learning among their students and use suggestions from our authors in future semesters. As always, we welcome comments, questions, and suggestions related to the journal, sent by email to jstemed@gmail.com.

Regards,
P.K. Raju
Editor-in-Chief