Syracuse University
College of Engineering
& Computer Science

Dean's Fund for Excellence

What is the Dean's Fund for Excellence?

Dear Alumni and Friends of ECS,

Thank you so much for your interest in our College and your commitment to our students, faculty, and staff. I am especially grateful that you are considering a gift to support the Dean's Fund for Excellence (DFFE). We are often asked how the DFFE is used, and what impact it has on our students.

Put simply, the DFFE allows me to seize amazing – but unplanned – opportunities that arise dynamically throughout the year. Great engineering and computer science programs constantly encounter important needs and requests from our community members, and of course there are only so many funds available to support them all. The DFFE allows me to be agile in responding to those requests.

Two great examples come to mind. Last year, one of our ECS student organizations wanted to attend a conference that focused on diversity and inclusion in technology, with a particular emphasis on connecting students to promising careers in the field. The students banded together to minimize their travel costs, but still were not able to afford the conference fees. I was able to use DFFE funds to cover the students' registration fees so they could attend. A few weeks later I learned that two of our students received "dream job" offers right there on the spot!

As a second example, one of our top faculty members in the field of algorithmic science devised a way to determine when farm animals were sick by using artificial intelligence to learn and anticipate their movements. Her algorithms could then raise an alarm when they deviated from their routines, indicating that the animal was under stress. This idea became the most unusual request I've received to date: AI-equipped tracking devices...for cows. I agreed, with trepidation, and deployed DFFE funds for this because her research showed great promise. Those funds just turned into an NSF grant worth a half million dollars.

As you can see, the Dean's Fund for Excellence is used in many pivotal and impactful ways. We use the DFFE to support our College at the grassroots level, and to invest in the people and ideas that truly define success for ECS. The next page contains some testimonials from students and faculty who have received funds from the DFFE, and I hope you'll take the time to read them. These stories show how DFFE funds can transform the Syracuse University ECS experience of our best and brightest individuals.

GO ORANGE!

J. Cole Smith, Ph.D.
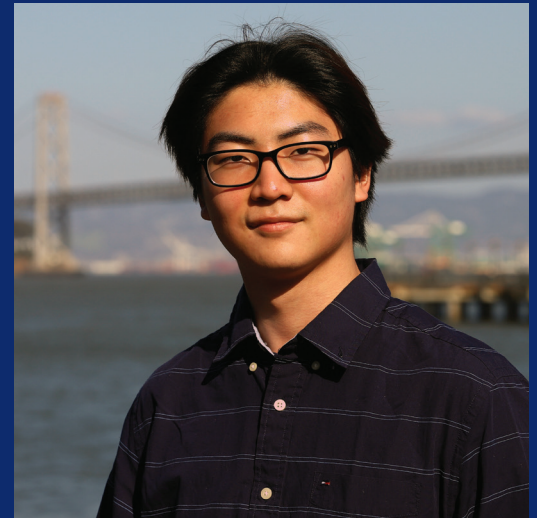Dean, College of Engineering and Computer Science

MAKING AN IMPACT

"This grant supported us in studying the use of machine learning to detect errors in distributing unemployment benefits across states and demographic groups. It funded faculty, students, and conference travel, and one of the papers that came out of this project won the Best Paper Award at the International Conference on Digital Government Research."

— Sucheta Soundarajan, professor of electrical engineering and computer science

"The Silicon Valley immersion trip was one of the peaks of my college experience so far. Doing something that is really important for me and my future career but getting to do it with all these other people who I can now form connections with."

—Jason Bae '25

"AFROTECH is paramount for students to advance their careers and grow professionally. Every single one of our students who had the opportunity to attend this conference last year was able to secure both full-time jobs and summer internships."
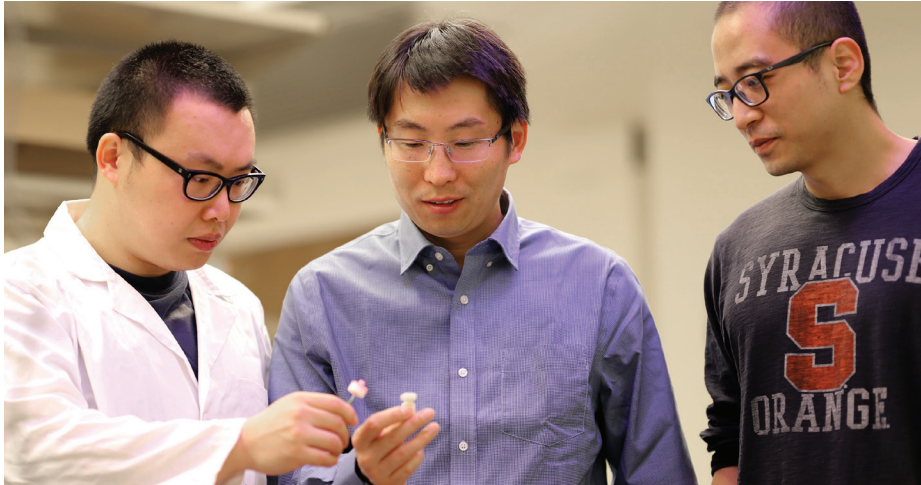
— Brianna Gillfillian '25

MAKE A GIFT →

Support Orange excellence and help students and faculty take learning to the next-level

Faculty and Research

At the heart of our college lies research. By supporting our distinguished faculty and their remarkable discoveries, you can help shape the future of our college and the world. Your support will not only make a lasting impact on our college but also prepare the next generation of researchers to continue pushing boundaries.

Student Experiences

At our college, we seek to provide transformative learning opportunities and immersive experiences that ignite students' passion for learning. With your support, we can work towards our vision of reimagining computer science and engineering education and enriching the student experience through various clubs and organizations.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

Our college is a diverse community of bright minds from around the globe and we're dedicated to fostering an inclusive environment. We believe diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility are crucial for achieving excellence in education. Our college seeks to provide students from underrepresented communities access to education at Syracuse University, encouraging diversity among our faculty, and supporting the ECS Office of Inclusive Excellence to increase the positive impact our college can have on the world.