



# COLUMBIA ENGINEERING

The Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science

## **Dean's Alumni Welcome Dinner & Columbia Engineering Alumni Association (CEAA) Awards Presentation**

### **Award Acceptance Speeches**

Thursday, May 29, 2025

7:00- 9:00 PM

Low Memorial Library 535 W. 116th St., New York, NY 10027

---



### **Dr. Zvi Galil, Dean Emeritus of Columbia Engineering - 2025 Pupin Medal Acceptance**

“Good evening, and thank you all. Thank you President Shipman for the gracious introduction. And thank you, especially, to the Columbia Engineering Alumni Association. I think we all know that the School would not be a fraction of what it is without your steady support and engagement, so while I accept this award of the Pupin Medal in gratitude on my own personal behalf, allow me also to express thanks, as someone who cares deeply about SEAS, for all that you do, and have done, across multiple generations, for the school. I said generations, and that’s only speaking of my own experience. The Association was founded in 1872. I came to SEAS a hundred and ten years later, and spent 25 years at the school, during the last 12 of which I had the privilege of being its dean. So, yes, generations. After I left, of course I remained closely in touch with many of you, and I had the pleasure of watching some seeds that were planted during my deanship grow and flourish. SEAS is a place that, for me, has many cherished memories. Times have changed - the issue now, at Columbia and other premier schools, is accessibility. In 2011 Sebastian Thrun and Peter Norwig taught the first MOOC, ‘Massive Open Online Course’, (on AI) to 160,000 students. In 2012 Sebastian and I envisioned a MOOC-based degree in Georgia Tech – a low-cost online MS degree in CS – OMSCS, \$7,000 for the entire degree. OMSCS started in January 2014 with 5 courses and 380 students; current number of courses 45 and 16,000 students from 120 countries with over 13,500 graduates. Notably the majority of our 630 TAs are alumni of OMSCS. The quality of our program is comparable to the on campus program and graduates receive identical diplomas. Applicants with degrees in other fields are



# COLUMBIA ENGINEERING

The Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science

welcome – all students are admitted “on probation” pending at least B in all courses in the first year to be formally accepted, no GRE is required. We accept about 80% of applicants! Access means 11.4% minority students in OMSCS compared to 3.8% in the on campus program; Access means graduates such as a NYC sanitation department driver, US soldiers moving to civilian life and an Indian army officer staged in the Himalayas. Over thirty universities followed and created over fifty similar programs. And it is precisely this – the uptake of this new online mode by universities and degree programs throughout the US – that is the greatest success of Georgia Tech’s OMSCS. On a national level, we need more throughput – MUCH more throughput – of STEM-trained professionals, chiefly but not exclusively scientists and engineers. Fluency in technology is ever more vital for all manner of careers, not just ones traditionally seen as “technologists”. The truly astounding statistic about OMSCS is that it doesn’t merely draw in students who would otherwise have attended a residential program – mostly, it opens the door to people who would simply not have had the opportunity to take a degree program AT ALL. So, the adoption of similar degree programs elsewhere is actually tangibly broadening the channel for accumulation of STEM human capital nationwide. This means more innovation, more productivity, more national resilience – ultimately, it means a brighter tomorrow, for all of us.”

---



## **Dr. Thomas Caulfield BS’82, MS’84, EngScD’86 (Metallurgical Engineering) - 2025 Egleston Medal Acceptance**

“ Thank you. I’m deeply honored to receive the Thomas Egleston Medal from Columbia University’s School of Engineering and Applied Science. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to the CEAA, Dean Chang, the University and Ana Rodriguez, Chair of the Egleston Medal Committee, for this incredible recognition - It means the world to me. It is important to also express my deep appreciation for the

unwavering support of my family and friends, and I want to especially thank and recognize those who are here tonight. My wife of 37 years and counting, Sandra, also a Columbia Engineering Alumna and another reason to be thankful for Columbia University where we met, my daughter Alex, my son Matthew and my son-in-law John Love. Let me also congratulate the other awardee’s – Savio and Zvi - I’m honored to be in the company with both of you tonight.



# COLUMBIA ENGINEERING

The Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science

This award is not just a personal milestone—it’s a reminder as well as a tribute to the power of education to change lives and, by extension, impact humanity. I am the son of a New York City firefighter. I was the first in my family to attend college. The doors that education opened for me changed the course of my life and that journey continues to shape both my personal growth and my ability to contribute to society.

Higher education—long a cornerstone of human progress—is increasingly caught in the crosshairs of political polarization. Universities are being scrutinized not just for what they teach, but for their very purpose. These tensions, if left unaddressed, will leave lasting consequences and erode the very foundation of future innovation, leadership, economic vitality and the fundamental value of education itself. We don’t just jeopardize student futures—we stall scientific discovery, weaken our global competitiveness and silence the diverse voices that higher education uniquely empowers—the very catalysts that have fueled American exceptionalism. At a time when disinformation spreads faster than truth, we must never forget what universities stand for. They are places that cultivate critical thinking and structured problem solving, foster respectful debate, and prepare students not just to succeed, but to lead with values, integrity and vision. Higher education is not just a luxury for the elite —it is a public good. Institutions like Columbia must continue to stand tall, to defend academic freedom, and to invest in the future by giving every student—regardless of socioeconomic status—a chance to rise. I urge all of us to do our part, to keep fighting the good fight. To support the mission of higher education, to stand up for intellectual freedom, to mentor the next generation, and to keep the doors open for the sons and daughters of firefighters, teachers, immigrants, and dreamers—just like they were opened for me.

Thank you again for this honor. I will carry it with pride, and with deep gratitude for what this university has given me—and what it continues to give the world.”



## **Savio Tung BS’73 - 2025 Johnson Medal Acceptance**

“Thank you so much. I’m truly honored to be here at this special alumni gathering. I want to begin by expressing my deep gratitude to Columbia University, the School of Engineering, and



# COLUMBIA ENGINEERING

The Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science

Dean Chang, whose leadership has brought about so many meaningful initiatives. I'm proud to be a part of this vibrant community.

I stand here humbled by this recognition—and especially touched to be honored alongside my longtime mentor, Dean Zvi Galil, who is here with us tonight. Dean Galil played a pivotal role in my journey. He recruited me, guided me, and showed me what it means to be a dedicated alumnus. His encouragement inspired me to join the Board of Trustees and to become more deeply involved with the university. I'm overjoyed to see him again and to see him honored as well.

Let me share just a bit of my story—though you're welcome to read the official bio later. Columbia gave me more than an education—it gave me a future. I received a scholarship that made it possible for me to attend, and it was here on campus that I met the love of my life, my dear wife Patty, who is with us tonight.

We were married at St. Paul's Chapel on June 1st, and this Sunday, we'll celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary. I still remember standing in that chapel, waiting for my bride to walk in—it's a memory I treasure deeply.

Columbia also helped me land my very first job, right here on campus. That opportunity led me to a management trainee position at Chase Manhattan Bank, which laid the foundation for my career in finance. I consider that role—and the education that led to it—crucial to any success I've had.

I also want to thank my son Kevin and his family for being here tonight, along with so many friends and fellow alumni. It's a joy to celebrate this moment with all of you.

Some of you have asked what I've learned over 50+ years in financial services. I wish I had a magic formula to share. But for me, it comes down to a few simple principles: Stay humble. Keep your promises. Never stop learning or engaging. And then—sometimes—luck finds you. Thank you again for this honor. Thank you to the Columbia Engineering Alumni Association, to Dean Chang, and to the university leadership. And most of all, thank you for continuing to support this great institution we all call home."