

2026 ASME MEEEd New Department Heads Workshop

8:00 AM – 12:00 PM

New Department Heads Workshop

In this dynamic workshop, we will explore the primary challenges and opportunities encountered by emerging leaders in mechanical engineering education. Led by seasoned experts and accomplished former department heads, this session aims to equip you with the knowledge, skills, and strategies necessary to thrive in your new role.

Speakers:

- Moderator: Orlando M. Ayala, PhD, Professor of Engineering Technology, Batten College of Engineering and Technology, Old Dominion University
- Joseph J. Rencis, PhD, PE, Associate Dean and Professor, School of Engineering, College of Aviation Worldwide, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
- Kenneth S. Ball, PhD, PE, Dean and Professor, College of Engineering and Computing, George Mason University
- Mohammad A. Zahraee, PhD, PE, Interim Dean and Professor, College of Technology, Purdue University Northwest

Detailed Program

8:00 am – 12:00 pm, Sunday, March 29, 2026

- 8:00 am: **Introductions.** Background of workshop leaders and participants.
- 8:30 am: **The Call to Department Leadership.** Transitioning from faculty to department head requires a shift in mindset from being a sole contributor to an advocate, decision-maker, and leader for the department. Knowing how to prioritize your commitments to various stakeholders, including yourself, can be challenging. We will explore strategies for developing leadership skills to help you successfully navigate the transition.
- 9:00 am Break
- 9:15 am: **Assessing the Strategic Position of the Department.** As a new department head, it can be overwhelming to make crucial decisions that will impact the department's future. It's understandable to feel like you may be missing vital information to make informed decisions. In this session, we will explore ways to learn more about the department's history and strategic position within the college and university. By doing so, you will be able to fill any knowledge gaps and feel more confident in your decision-making abilities.
- 9:45 am: Networking
- 10:15 am: **Establishing an Effective Industry Advisory Council.** An advisory group can be the game-changer for your department's success. Whether you call it a board, committee, or council, it must have well-defined goals. To ensure the council's success, recruiting members who align with your department's mission and support its strategic priorities is crucial. The council can assist in various areas, such as offering advice on curriculum and programs,

acquiring resources, sponsoring capstone projects, hiring students, and engaging alumni. This session will explore critical issues in establishing an effective industry advisory council.

- 10:45 am: **Mentoring and Coaching of Junior and Mid-Career Faculty.** The department head plays a crucial role in influencing the success and retention of junior faculty and in promoting mid-career faculty. Mentors provide guidance by sharing their experiences and offering advice to help navigate challenging situations. In contrast, coaches assist individuals in discovering and achieving their own solutions. As a department head, you may not see yourself primarily as a coach or mentor, but fulfilling both roles are vital to your faculty's success and to your effectiveness in this position. In this session, we will discuss best practices to promote faculty success and retention.
- 11:15 am Break
- 11:30 am: **Takeaways and Summary.**
- 12:00 pm End of Workshop