Date: April 25, 2018

To: Graduate Faculty Executive Committee

From: James P. Blanchard, Executive Associate Dean

RE: Suspension of Admission to the online Master of Science: Mechanical Engineering in Controls

At its April 25, 2018 meeting, the College of Engineering Academic Planning Council unanimously recommended approval of the proposal to suspend admission to the Master of Science: Mechanical Engineering in Controls program.

Due to the impending retirement of the key faculty member involved with this program, the decision was made to request suspension of admission to allow for re-evaluation of this offering. Additional information can be found in the memo below.

On behalf of the College of Engineering, I endorse and accept the recommendation to suspend admission to the Master of Science: Mechanical Engineering in Controls program.
MEMORANDUM

To: William J. Karpus  
   Dean, Graduate School 
   Sarah C. Mangelsdorf  
   Provost 

From: Jaal B. Ghandhi  
   Grainger Professor of Sustainable Energy and Chair, Mechanical Engineering

Re: Suspension of Admission to the online Master of Science: Mechanical Engineering in Controls

Request:
The Department of Mechanical Engineering is proposing that admission to its online Master of Science: Mechanical Engineering in Controls program be suspended effective immediately.

Precipitating Factors / Background:
The Master of Science: Mechanical Engineering in Controls program was largely built around the research of Mechanical Engineering Professor Robert Lorenz. Professor Lorenz teaches three out of seven courses required for this degree. In addition, Professor Lorenz has historically advised the majority of the students conducting independent study projects that are part of the program’s research requirement. Unfortunately, Professor Lorenz has received a serious health diagnosis that has accelerated his plans for retirement.

Because there are no existing faculty members within the Department in a position to take over the courses historically taught by Professor Lorenz at the present time, I am requesting an immediate suspension of admissions to allow more time to assess if and how the program should be re-structured or whether to discontinue the program. A final decision on the program will be made by the Spring of 2021.

Communication plan:
The Department of Engineering Professional Development provides support to the Department of Mechanical Engineering for delivery of this online graduate degree program. I have been in close communication with the EPD chair, Professor Douglas Reindl, regarding our intention to suspend admission to this degree program. Professor Reindl concurs with the plan to suspend and he has communicated this direction to all EPD staff involved with this program. Once approved, a wider communication of this program’s status will be shared with the Division of Continuing Studies (for removal of the program from the AYC website and other marketing
efforts) and the COE Grad Student Center. Information on informing current program applicants is provided below. Once approved, current students in the program will be given a schedule for future course offerings with guidance to adhere to that schedule in order to ensure they will meet the requirements for their degree.

Teach-out plan:
At present, there are six graduate students enrolled in the online Master of Science: Mechanical Engineering in Controls program. One candidate is on track to graduate at the conclusion of the Sp’18 semester, three are on track to graduate by the conclusion of the Sp’19 semester, and two have longer times to degree. All five students scheduled to graduate after Sp’18 still need to complete the research component for their programs. Professor Lorenz has agreed to advise three of the remaining five students as those three are on track to complete their degrees by Sp’19, the last semester Professor Lorenz intends to teach. These three students only require one or more elective courses beyond the research component. Professor Bulent Sarlioglu (EPD and ECE) has agreed to serve as faculty research advisors for the remaining two students who started the controls program in Fall ‘16 and ‘17. These two students still need to take the following required courses: ME746 and ME577. Professor Lorenz has agreed to teach ME746 in the Sp’19 semester. ME577 is offered during the summer every other year and its next planned offering is during the Su’19 semester. Plans are not yet complete for teaching ME577 in Su’19; however, we anticipate this course will be covered. A backup plan is to utilize either ECE504 or ECE 512 as a substitute for ME577. ECE504 is taught every other summer and will be taught Su’18 and is expected to be taught in Summer 2020.

Courses that will continue to be taught and available to the current students in the Controls program include the following controls-related courses ME446, ME447, and ME747. In addition the online Power program courses ECE355, ECE411, ECE412, ECE427, ECE711, ECE712, ECE713, ECE714, ME/ECE 739 will also be available. Additional elective courses can be taken from EPD701, EPD702, EPD703, EPD704, EPD706, EPD708, EPD712, EPD713, EPD781, EPD782, EPD783, EPD784, and EPD785 provide other elective course options for the existing Controls program students intending complete the requirements for their degree.

In addition to the six students currently active in the program, there are an additional two students that are stopped-out of the program. One student has completed nine credits but has not been enrolled since the Fa’17 semester and the second student has completed three credits and has not been enrolled since the Fa’16 semester. There are no plans to readmit either of these students; however, students that have stopped-out will be given the option to apply to the Master of Science Electrical Engineering Power program (a related online degree program) and, if accepted, their accumulated credits from the Controls degree program applied toward that program.

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1 A number of courses in the Controls program are also shared with the online Master of Science: Electrical Engineering Power program.
Admissions Status:
The program will not admit new students in Fa’18. Current and incomplete program received a communication on 3/23/18 from EPD Chair Douglas Reindl explaining that program admissions had been suspended.

As of 3/23/18 there were 4 complete applications in Applicant Review. Those applicants received a letter from Professor Reindl explaining that admissions to the online program had been suspended. EPD has already initiated application fee refunds for applicants who only have applied to the online program. (Most applicants applied to multiple Mechanical Engineering programs and those applications are still being processed.) The EPD Graduate Programs Coordinator is fielding questions and communications from applicants. Ten in-process applicants with incomplete online Controls applications received a similar email from Professor Reindl on 3/23/18.

Approvals:
The Executive Committee of the Department of Mechanical Engineering unanimously approved this proposal at its meeting on April 19, 2018. The Academic Planning Council of the College of Engineering approved the proposal at its meeting on April 25, 2018. (A memo from Executive Associate Dean Jake Blanchard is attached to this memo.)