

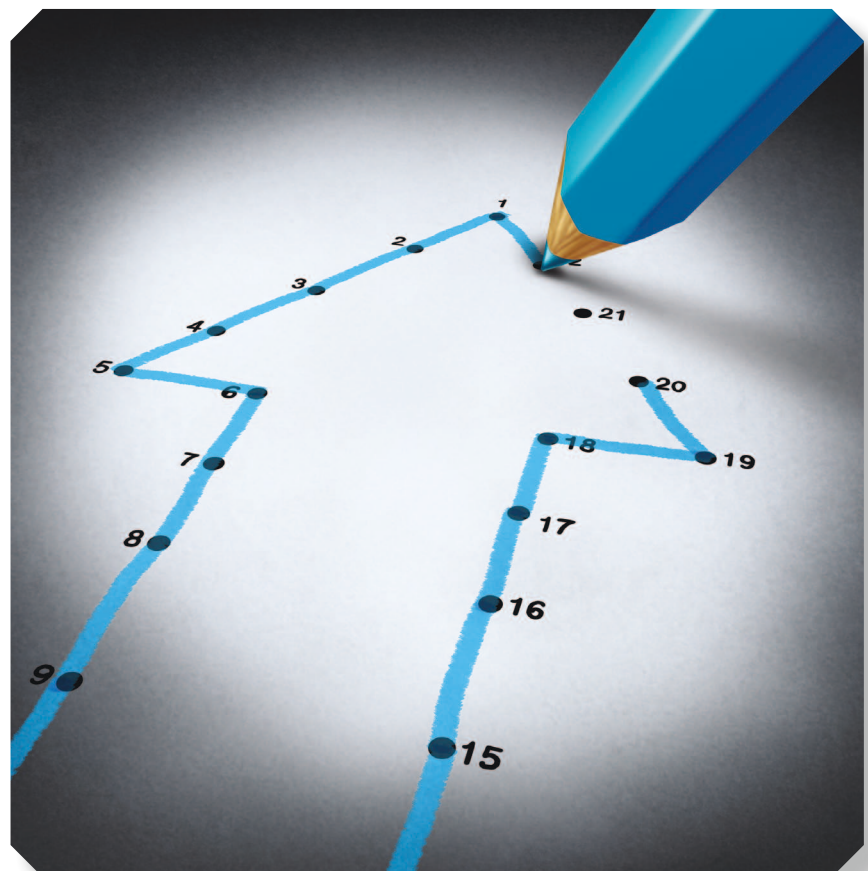
IMS2019 Project Connect—It's Your Time to Connect

Rhonda Franklin, Christal Gordon, Michael Grady, Duane Harvey, Rashaunda Henderson, Netra Pillay, and Tom Weller

If you are reading this article, odds are you have attended the IEEE Microwave Theory and Techniques Society (MTT-S) International Microwave Symposium (IMS) not once, but many times. It is an exciting event, where you know you will see familiar faces, brush shoulders with technical pioneers, and witness a display of just about the entire industry. Simply put, IMS is the Lay's potato chip of conferences—"You can't attend just one." So, if you want to attract a group of up-and-coming future engineers to the microwave industry, a great place to start is by bringing them to the IMS. This is the mission of Project Connect, an initiative focused on increasing the participation of underrepresented minorities in the RF/microwave field. If

Rhonda Franklin, Christal Gordon, Michael Grady, Duane Harvey, Rashaunda Henderson, Netra Pillay, and Tom Weller are members of the IMS2019 Project Connect Committee.

Digital Object Identifier 10.1109/MMM.2019.2891814
Date of publication: 7 March 2019



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Figure 1. Members of Project Connect at the five previous IMSs.

you would like to help inspire the next generation of engineers, it might be time for you to connect with IMS2019 Project Connect in Boston.

Why does the industry need Project Connect? The answer is two-fold. First, we obviously want the best, brightest, and most motivated people working on solutions to pressing problems of the 21st century, and we need to seek out these bright people from all reaches of society. Second, we need to give students from underrepresented groups an immersive experience in the RF/microwave field to see if it captures their interest. For example, today in the United States, the typical female

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enrollment in undergraduate electrical engineering programs is below 12%, and only ~1% and ~2% of engineering doctoral degrees are awarded to African Americans and Hispanics, respectively. We must do better.

Heading into its sixth year, there is ample evidence that Project Connect is working by increasing the number of highly qualified new RF/microwave engineers from underrepresented backgrounds (see Figure 1). With support from the MTT-S IMS Steering Committee and the National Science Foundation, nearly 90 senior undergraduate and graduate students from underrepresented groups in engineering have participated since

the inaugural year in 2014. Approximately 25% of the students attend either a historically black, Hispanic-serving, or emerging Hispanic-serving institution, and nearly 20% of them are from outside the United States. Pre- and postsurveys suggest that students have a greater awareness about the RF industry, a better understanding of microwave engineering, and plan to take more RF/microwave courses after participating in Project Connect.

Project Connect students follow a tailored conference agenda intended to expose them to new technologies and introduce them to the RF and microwave community. The agenda includes focused panel sessions with industry and academic leaders, along with regular IMS activities such as panel sessions and student design competitions. In addition to this professional development, there is an opportunity for the students to gain exposure to the history and culture of the host city that blends community-building and long-term networks.

Please join us at any of the Project Connect events (check the IMS program for details) to meet the students. We would especially appreciate your attendance at the industry mixer that takes place on Wednesday afternoon. The mixer is a great opportunity to learn about the diverse backgrounds of Project Connect attendees as well as for those who keep coming back to IMS to share some advice with new attendees that will help them along their path to becoming lifelong microwave engineers. You are welcome to attend another entertaining event where the students present "IMS Through My Eyes" videos on Thursday afternoon.

To date, Project Connect has inspired many students from underrepresented groups to enter RF/microwave engineering. There will be a series of rousing events for the newest generation of students, as highlighted in the IMS conference agenda. We hope that you can attend to meet, and perhaps inspire, some of these students.

