Dr. Alan Parkinson
Alumnus BYU Professor

Final Lecture: A Reflection on Faith

Alan Parkinson’s career at BYU spanned 37 years where he served as a Faculty Member, Department Chair of Mechanical Engineering (1995 - 2001), Associate Dean (2003 - 2005) and Dean (2005 – 2016) of the college of Engineering. Alan received a PhD from the University of Illinois (1982) and an MBA from BYU (2003). He received an honored Alumni Award from the University of Illinois in 2010 and is an ASME Fellow. In 2003 he received the Design Automation Award from ASME, a society level award given to one person annually. In 2017 he was awarded the Abraham O. Smoot Citizenship Award, the highest award given at BYU to recognize outstanding contributions in citizenship and service.

One of Alan’s greatest accomplishments was the raising of over $80M for the construction of the new Engineering Building, which now houses the Futon College of Engineering. The building provides beautiful offices, classrooms, team rooms, and labs for the students and faculty. The building successfully puts working students on display in a bright functional environment.

Alan’s research area involved design and optimization. He was an early leader in optimization where he created a software program called OPDES, which was used by industry to optimize any design that could be described and evaluated mathematically. He is the author of 64 peer-reviewed publications with over 2300 citations. His most cited work is “A General Approach to Optimal Design” published in the ASME Journal of Mechanical Design.

Alan is a masterful teacher focusing on ways to clarify concepts. His students benefited from careful organization, attention to detail, clear examples, visual aids, class participation, and high expectations. As Dean, Alan always took time to prepare for lectures and to consider the needs of the students in all decisions that were made.

Every student and alumni in the College of Engineering past, present, and future has and will benefitted in some way from the service of Alan Parkinson. He is dedicated to the mission of BYU and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.