Dear TechTrends Readers,

I must admit that initially I was at a loss for words when asked to write an article for this column. This is an unusual circumstance for me, as many of my professors in the Instructional Design, Development and Evaluation (IDD&E) Department at Syracuse University will attest.

Words were a bit hard to put on paper for this column because at the AECT 2005 Annual Convention in Orlando, Florida, I was awarded a Cochran Internship that for me was most unexpected — a very pleasant surprise. After returning home from Orlando, yet another surprise awaited me: the request that I write an article for the ECT Cornerstone column in TechTrends. How does one find adequate words to express the honor and sense of achievement that this event represents?

My inclination is to share a special experience, as an intern, before arriving at and while attending the 2005 convention. The interns are introduced to leaders and experts within the AECT membership and attend various business meetings during the annual conference. My experiences as an intern began a month before arriving at the convention site through email exchanges, telephone and personal contact with members of the AECT Board of Directors and the ECT Foundation. This flurry of activity concerned a topic that was eventually incorporated in the Special Program Task Force report to the AECT Board. I was invited to participate in the discussions. From special people like Donal Little and Drs. Dave Tiedemann, Richard Cornell, Addie Kissinger, Ana Donaldson and Nathan Lowell I gained important insights regarding how the AECT functions and learned about the significant role that the ECT Foundation plays within the AECT. More importantly, I learned from these discussions — and when I met these individuals at the 2005 convention — all were welcoming and very accepting of graduate student members and their participation in AECT. In particular, it was a very special pleasure to have the opportunity to meet members of the ECT Foundation.

It is the ECT Foundation’s commitment to AECT that has made possible many of the awards — internships, scholarships, memorial awards and fellowships — that AECT offers its graduate student members. These awards are designed to recognize the contributions graduate students have made to the field through their academic pursuits and the leadership potential that they have demonstrated as members of AECT. In essence, the ECT Foundation does not just invite us (as graduate students) to participate in AECT development programs and conference activities, but it also challenges us to excel and set our goals high.

Likewise, the Foundation invites faculty members to sponsor new students in AECT. Many faculty members have accomplished the task with great results; graduate students now represent nearly one-third of AECT’s membership. More importantly, faculty members are also invited to guide us (as their students) in identifying opportunities for participation in the organization’s varied activities and events and mentor us as future leaders. In my case, I was encouraged to attend my first AECT convention (2004, Chicago) by Dr. Phil Doughty, IDD&E department chair; Dr. Tiffany Koszalka, an IDD&E faculty member; and Don Ely, Professor Emeritus and a mentor. It was Dr. Doughty who encouraged me to submit an application for a 2005 internship.
ect Foundation Kicks Off Endowment Capital Campaign: A Virtual Building for the Future of Educational Technology

Lofty words for a lofty cause! The ECT Foundation and AECT have launched a project to build up the funding base of the endowment that traditionally supplies the money for scholarships, fellowships and leadership development activities within AECT. The realistic goal of $50,000 to be raised over a period of three years offers AECT members the opportunity to support both the activities of the Foundation and the AECT goals.

With $12,150 already pledged to the campaign (primarily from the Boards of the Foundation and AECT), Foundation President Addie Kinsinger encourages AECT members to follow the Board leadership, contributing at whatever level they decide.

The Virtual Building Construction concept

AECT members are encouraged to “buy bricks, or a window, or a column.” toward construction of a virtual building representing the enthusiasm and dedication of professionals within the educational communications and technology field. As support grows at varying levels of contributions, the new endowment virtual building will rise before our eyes. Names of contributors or honorees will be imprinted on the building parts as it rises (unless an individual donor wishes to remain anonymous). Groups and/or divisions may contribute in recognition of a mentor or an entire faculty that they wish to honor. ECT Foundation is a 501-c-3 non-profit organization, so the guaranteed contribution receipt will serve well at tax time.

The ECT Foundation challenges AECT members to be builders of the future. Feel good about raising the roof!

In the short time that I have been a member of AECT, and particularly from my experience as an intern at the 2005 convention, I have learned that AECT is an organization built around the hard work and commitment of volunteers. From well-known experts in our field to faculty and graduate student volunteers at annual conventions, the spirit of volunteerism is shared throughout the organization.

The ECT Foundation is an example of that spirit of volunteerism. My interactions with the ECT Foundation members as individuals, and collectively at one of their meetings during the 2005 convention, have been very rewarding experiences and ones that I will continue to esteem highly. The dedication and volunteerism of the ECT Foundation is one that, as interns and graduate student members of AECT, we can learn from and look to as an excellent example of what we can achieve within AECT and in our chosen careers.

As recipients of the 2005 Internships, we are challenged to follow in the footsteps of the interns who have gone before us and have volunteered their energy, knowledge, long hours and dedication to the organization. Many are now both leaders in AECT and the experts in our field that we aspire to be. Several of them are current AECT Board members — for example, Drs. Ana Donaldson and Nathan Lowell; both interns in 2000.

I am not certain even at this point that I have found words sufficiently adequate to express my feelings and experiences in this short column. Nevertheless, on the behalf of my colleagues who are the 2005 interns, and for the graduate student members in AECT, I want to end by simply saying “thank you” to the ECT Foundation. We recognize and sincerely appreciate your commitment to us and to AECT, and especially your efforts to help develop future leaders in our field.