MEET OUR SPEAKERS

TODD BARBER is a JPL senior propulsion engineer, spending two decades as lead propulsion engineer on the Cassini mission to Saturn, following part-time work on the Mars Exploration Rover (MER) mission, Deep Impact mission, and the Mars Science Laboratory (MSL) mission, which landed the large rover Curiosity on the red planet on August 5th, 2012. Cassini was launched on October 15, 1997 on its two-billion-mile, seven-year journey to the ringed planet. It “took the plunge” into Saturn’s atmosphere in 2017 after thirteen years in orbit around Saturn. The MER team launched twin rovers to the red planet in June and July of 2003, and Spirit and Opportunity lasted six years and fourteen years, respectively, into their three-month missions. Todd also worked as the lead impactor propulsion engineer on Deep Impact, which successfully crashed into Comet Tempel-1 on Independence Day, 2005, at twenty-three-thousand miles per hour. Todd recently completed working on the Dawn mission, an ion propulsion mission to the two largest main-belt asteroids, Vesta and Ceres. He also recently began supporting the Soil Moisture Active Passive (SMAP) mission and was the Mars2020 propulsion lead engineer for operations. Much to Todd’s delight, he is now supporting the Voyager mission as well, more than forty years after launch.

Mr. Barber worked on the Galileo project for over seven years and his primary responsibility was getting Galileo into Jupiter orbit on December 7, 1995. Todd also worked part-time on the Space Infra-Red Telescope Facility (SIRTF) mission and on the Stardust mission, as well as the Mars Sample Return mission and a Mars airplane study. Todd received NASA’s Exceptional Achievement Award in 1996 for his work on Galileo. In 2018, Mr. Barber was also honored to receive NASA’s Exceptional Public Service Medal for heading up Cassini’s propulsion team for nearly two decades.

Mr. Barber is a native of Wichita, Kansas, and attended MIT between 1984 and 1990, obtaining B.S. and M.S. degrees in aerospace engineering, with a humanities concentration in music. He is also a composer of church choral music, with two pieces published to date. His hobbies include singing charitably and professionally, playing the piano, snagging degree confluences (exact integer latitude/longitude intersections), visiting all the U.S. tri-state corners and national parks, playing basketball (though it’s been a while), and amateur astronomy.
CHRISTOPHER T. COMBS is a 2007 graduate of the University of Oklahoma College of Law. He began his career specializing in general civil litigation with an emphasis on cases involving insurance, commercial litigation, personal injury and products liability, including trial and appellate work in state and federal courts. In 2017, he joined the Hayes, Magrini & Gatewood law firm, where he has shifted his focus to construction and surety litigation, as well as business litigation, representing clients in both the prosecution and defense of claims.

Mr. Combs is a member of American Bar Association Fidelity and Surety Committee, American Bar Association Forum on the Construction Industry, Oklahoma Association of Defense Counsel and the Surety Association of Oklahoma. He was selected as an Oklahoma Super Lawyers “Rising Star” from 2010 – 2016. He is licensed in all state and federal district courts in Oklahoma, as well as the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals.

GEOFF COVALT, P.E. is a seasoned professional with over 29 years of experience in transportation, land development, and municipal projects. His diverse career spans roles from design project engineer to construction engineering and inspection to owner of a construction company. Geoff’s extensive experience encompasses a wide range of projects, including notable projects such as the Turner Turnpike widening, Gilcrease Expressway, and the Purcell-Lexington bridge rehabilitation. With a robust background in strategic planning and operations, Geoff has a proven track record of driving growth and enhancing operational efficiency for various organizations. His leadership skills are complemented by his ability to foster collaborative team environments and his keen insight into market trends. Geoff’s dedication to excellence and innovation has established him as a respected figure in his industry, consistently delivering results that exceed expectations.

On a personal level, Geoff has been married to his wife, Shana, for over 28 years. They have three children—Reagan, Cooper, and Cade—and one grandchild, Creek. Geoff is deeply committed to his church, family, and community. In addition to his service to the Oklahoma Society of Professional Engineers and other industry organizations, he serves in various capacities within his church and community, including his role as Mayor of Kingfisher. His hobbies include spending time with family, hunting, attending sporting events, golfing, and enjoying various other activities.
Jorge Delucca has been working for OSHA for 20 years, as a bilingual (Spanish) Industrial Hygienist, first at the OSHA Dallas Area Office and currently at the Oklahoma City Area Office where he is the Compliance Assistance Specialist and Voluntary Protection Program Coordinator. He did a 20-year career in the US Air Force, most of it as a Bioenvironmental Engineer. After he retired, he worked as an Environmental, Safety and Health Engineer in private industry. He was an adjunct instructor of Environmental Science and Ethics at the University of Phoenix, Oklahoma City Campus before he joined OSHA. He has a bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Puerto Rico, a Master of Science in Environmental Management from the University Of Oklahoma Hudson College Of Public Health and a Master of Arts in Business Administration from Webster College. He is the author of the book A Few Great Scientists: From Alfred Nobel to Carl Sagan.

Walter Dinkins, P.E. is with LeVarre International and has worked as an electrical engineer for over 30 years at major oilfield services companies, primarily in the segment that manufactures electric submersible pumps (ESP) used to accelerate oil production. In addition to technical knowledge of the downhole and surface systems, he has experience in R&D, manufacturing, software development, regional account management and participation on industry standards groups. Walter completed his Bachelors and Masters Degrees in Electrical Engineering at Oklahoma State University and has a Masters Degree in Ceramic Engineering from Georgia Tech. He is a licensed professional engineer in the states of Alaska and Oklahoma. Walter has been married to his life-partner Rebecca for 37 years and has four kids and two grandsons.

Joe Echelle, P.E., MBA is the Executive Director of the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority. He began his career with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation as an engineer in training in 2001 then a draftsman, a construction surveyor, the Resident Engineer in Stillwater and subsequently advanced to be the Construction Engineer for ODOT's Division 4. He was instrumental in the construction of the Interstate 40 Crosstown project in Oklahoma City along with the deconstruction and bridge beam recycling project of the old crosstown expressway bridge. In 2016 Echelle began work at the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority as the Director of Construction to manage the Turnpike Authority’s annual capital improvement construction projects and the Driving Forward Turnpike Improvement Program.

Echelle earned a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from Oklahoma State University in 2005 and is a registered Professional Engineer. In 2010 he completed his graduate degree at OSU and received a Master of Business Administration. He has received several awards for highway construction and design from the American Concrete Paving
Association and the Asphalt Paving Association. He is a member of the Governors Highway Construction Materials Technician Certification Board, the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association as well as an adjunct faculty member at Oklahoma State University teaching surveying to Civil Engineering and Construction Management majors. He resides in Stroud, Oklahoma with his wife Lacey, son Grant, and daughter Taryn.

**Tim Gatz** currently serves as the Governor’s appointee as Executive Director of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation.

Beginning his agency career in 1990 as a drafting technician, Gatz has more than 30 years of service with ODOT. His dynamic transportation knowledge is rooted in his project management and program delivery experience, in addition to his time served as ODOT Deputy Director. Gatz has previously served in appointed roles as the Oklahoma Secretary of Transportation and the Executive Director of the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority. He is a member of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, and the American Society of Landscape Architects.

**Kathy Hart** is the Executive Director of the Oklahoma State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors. She is a graduate of Oklahoma State University and began working for the Board in 1990. In 1994 Kathy was named the Board’s Executive Director. For the past 30 years she has also been active with the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying, serving on and chairing numerous national committees within NCEES.

**Tricia Hatley, P.E.** is an Executive Vice President for Freese and Nichols overseeing operations in the firm’s Southeast and Gulf Coast regions. Along with her wide variety of transportation and stormwater, planning, and public infrastructure design experience, she is also particularly skilled in public involvement and outreach. Tricia served as the National Society of Professional Engineers President in 2020-2021. While serving as President, she successfully navigated the organization through the impacts of the COVID pandemic. Tricia graduated from Oklahoma State University with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering and has been working at FNI since graduation. An avid runner, Tricia has completed numerous full and half marathons.
John M. Henshaw, P.E., Ph.D., is Department Chair and Harry H. Rogers Professor of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Tulsa. A native of Tulsa, he holds degrees from Vanderbilt University and the University of Delaware. At TU, he performs research in materials science, devices for persons with disabilities, and failure analysis. He has published three books about science and technology for a general audience. He is the faculty advisor for the MADE at TU student organization.

Greg Jeffries, CUC, M. ASCE
Mr. Jeffries brings over three decades of extensive experience in utilities, surveying, and construction, with a focus on subsurface utility engineering and utility location services. He is a recognized expert in utility construction and construction management, specializing in utility location and avoidance issues. Mr. Jeffries is proficient in all aspects of utility location, including EM theory, vacuum excavation, and ground-penetrating radar. He oversees SUE/UC projects and initiatives across the southwestern United States and internationally in Saudi Arabia, Dubai, and Pakistan. ASCE – UESI Subsurface Utility Engineering & Investigations Committee.

Morgan Jones is a licensed architect and nonprofit founder, consummate Project Manager, Design-Thinker, and Strategic Consultant turned Social Entrepreneur. Named to the Journal Record’s inaugural “Power List of Women in STEM”, she is recognized for her ability to develop formal and informal coalitions to address workplace and community problems—driving social and structural change. In her work with the STEAM Engine, she is working with state and community leaders to address STEM workforce shortages through strategic investments in K-20 STEM and Arts education and work-based learning initiatives through an Impact Partnership Grant funded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. She is a sought-after speaker, strategic consultant, and task-force member, recently appointed to the Career Pathways Committee of the Governor’s Workforce and Economic Development Council. Jones holds a Bachelor of Architecture from Oklahoma State University and a Master of Business Administration from Oklahoma Christian University.

Jennifer McCollum, APR, is the executive director of the Oklahoma Engineering Foundation. She has a bachelor’s degree in political science and speech communication and 40 hours of graduate work in history and English. She has served as the spokesperson for several government agencies and as the inaugural executive director of two advocacy nonprofits. She holds accreditation in public relations. She lives in Oklahoma City with her husband and three children. In her free time, she enjoys writing and photography.
**Representative Nicole Miller** grew up throughout the central United States, eventually settling in the Fort Worth area. After earning a bachelor’s degree in government service from Texas Women’s University, she moved to Washington, D.C., where she worked on policy issues, with a specific focus on the defense sector. Miller spent the next several years as a military spouse, living coast to coast and overseas during her husband Doug’s 20 year career with the Air Force. After moving to Oklahoma City, she worked with the Oklahoma National Guard and the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs.

Since being elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives in 2018, Miller has pursued legislation in a variety of policy areas, including military and veteran affairs, government efficiency, senior care and transportation. She currently serves as the Chair for the House Appropriations and Budget Subcommittee on Transportation.

She also sits on the House Government Modernization and Efficiency Committee and the full House Appropriations and Budget Committee.

Since her election, she has developed a reputation as a strong and articulate advocate on a number of legislative issues. In her first term, Miller was presented with the Rising Star Award by the State Chamber of Commerce for her role as a legislative leader in the business community. She was one of 20 legislators chosen from within the southern region to attend the Center for the Advancement of Leadership Skills (CALS) in 2019. Additionally, she was named Legislator of the Year in 2023 for the Veterans council.

Miller proudly represents northwest Oklahoma City, west Edmond and Deer Creek in House District 82. She and her husband have two children and attend Heritage Baptist Church.

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**Dr. Ali Mirchi** is an Associate Professor of Water Resources Engineering in the Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering at Oklahoma State University. He applies systems modeling and analysis techniques, including system dynamics simulation, optimization and watershed hydrologic modeling to advance understanding of coupled human-natural systems at different scales. His research focuses on water resources planning and management to derive policy insights that promote water sustainability. Dr. Mirchi is currently working on several research projects in the U.S. and overseas, investigating adaptive water resources management strategies in the face of population growth, competing demands, and climatic extremes.
**DR. TYSON OCHSNER** was raised on a farm near Chattanooga, Oklahoma. He earned a B.S. in Environmental Science at Oklahoma State University in 1998. He then studied Soil Science and Water Resources at Iowa State University, earning a M.S. in 2000 and a Ph.D. in 2003. From 2003 through 2008, he worked as a soil scientist for the USDA Agricultural Research Service in St. Paul, Minnesota. Since then, he has served as assistant, associate, and full professor of applied soil physics in the department of Plant and Soil Sciences at Oklahoma State University. He was selected as a Fellow of the Soil Science Society of America in 2019. The aim of Dr. Ochsner’s soil physics work is to help people better understand and appreciate the soil, the soil water balance, and the surface energy balance so that we can more wisely manage and conserve the land and water with which we have been entrusted. His team’s primary research focus is on multi-scale soil moisture monitoring and improved utilization of soil moisture data in agriculture, meteorology, environmental modeling, and drought adaptation.

**J.W. PETERS** is currently serving as the President for the Oklahoma Solar Association. In addition to his volunteer work with the OSA, J.W. is also the president, cofounder, and managing partner of Solar Power of Oklahoma. J.W. is an experienced business owner, solar advocate, and leader in renewables in Oklahoma. Driven by his passion for renewable energy, he takes pride in educating Oklahomans on the benefits of solar and the true expected benefits. He has spent the past 7 years building a company that provides the absolute best customer experience for their prospective and current customers. J.W. leads by example, including his time spent installing solar on hot Oklahoma summer roofs in the early years of the company. J.W. is an active member of his community. He is currently serving as a board member for the Oklahoma Renewable Energy Council, and is as a proud alumnus of Salt and Light Leadership Training Class 2, Leadership OKC Class 30, and Leadership Oklahoma Class 22, J.W. gives numerous talks throughout the year across the state about the importance of solar energy, energy diversity, and how municipalities, private businesses, electrical utilities, and tribal governments can harness the power of the sun! J.W. Peters is a true Solar Energy Pioneer in Oklahoma.
BRUCE A. PITTS, P.L.S. is a licensed land surveyor and served for 15 years as Director of Enforcement for the State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors. Prior to his present engagement with the State Board, Mr. Pitts practiced land surveying in Oklahoma City for 30 years, most recently with Smith Roberts Baldischwiler. He received his B.S. degree in Engineering Technology from Oklahoma State University and is an emeritus member of the State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors and the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) where he has served on the Engineering Mobility Task Force, Surveying Exam Committee and chaired the Law Enforcement Committee.

TOM POTEET, P.E. is the VP of Corporate Development for Mesa Natural Gas Solutions. Tom’s purview in this role includes characterizing and casting the vision for the optimal use of natural gas powered generation, monitoring the innovation stream for future sources of power, and development of customized rate plans and progressive field applications to meet customers' needs and financial preferences. With over 40 years in engineering, Tom’s career has given him experience in electric power, telecommunications, and oil field production. Tom graduated from Oklahoma State University with a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering.

KEVIN PRATT is a licensed Property & Casualty agent, specializing in professional liability and risk management services to architects and engineers, in a variety of disciplines. He specializes in Professional Liability Insurance, Project Management, Technical Training, Account Management, Sales, Vendor/Contract Management, and Network and Systems Support. He joined USI in 2007. Kevin oversees the Architects & Engineers Division in Houston, Texas. In Texas alone, USI currently represents more than 700 design firms. Nationally, USI represents over 4,000 design firms. Kevin holds a degree in Business/Information Systems from University of Phoenix and has over 30 years of project management and sales experience. In his spare time, Kevin enjoys spending time with his wife, Chelsea, and their four children, and watching or attending sporting events.
**Amit Ranjan** is a distinguished industry expert with 15+ years of experience in automotive propulsion systems, specializing in emission reduction technologies and electric propulsion. At Cummins Inc., he led the engineering of Ultra-high efficiency Single Module exhaust aftertreatment systems, crucial for meeting EPA emissions targets for major manufacturers like Daimler and Stellantis. Amit’s pivotal contributions to the STLA Large BEV architecture as propulsion system platform manager facilitated industry-leading advancements in range, efficiency, and charging speeds for brands like Alfa Romeo and Chrysler. Holding a Master’s in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Michigan, Amit currently serves as the Director of Manufacturing Engineering at Canoo Technologies Inc., overseeing all manufacturing technologies to achieve the company’s production objectives.

**Randl L. Raper, PhD, P.E.**, graduated from Mississippi State University with a B.S. degree in Agricultural Engineering in 1983, from Iowa State University with a M.S. degree in 1985, and with a Ph.D. degree in 1987. From 1983-2011, he worked with USDA-ARS in Ames, IA, Auburn, AL and in Booneville, AR as he took on increasing levels of responsibility. In 2002, he was appointed Lead Scientist of the newly formed Conservation Systems Research Team where he provided leadership for a multi-disciplinary research team of six scientists. In 2009, he moved to Booneville, AR where he became the Research Leader of the USDA-ARS Dale Bumpers Small Farms Research Center and the Co-Coordinator of the USDA Southeastern Biomass Feedstock Research Center. While at Booneville, he managed a 2300-acre research center that employed 22 people with 6 scientists. In 2012, he moved to Stillwater, OK where he became the Senior Director of the Field and Research Services Unit at Oklahoma State University (OSU) where he managed 18 research stations across Oklahoma and supervised more than 60 employees. He has taken on increasing levels of responsibility at OSU and is currently the Assistant Director of the Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station and the Assistant Vice-President of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. He has published extensively and has given invited lectures throughout the U.S. and the world. His awards have included the 2006 American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers Distinguished Lecturer, the 2007 USDA-ARS Scientist of the Year for the MidSouth Area, and the 2008 No-Till Innovator of the Year for Research and Education.
JARED SCHWENNESEN, P.E. is the head of the Multi-Modal Division at the Oklahoma Department of Transportation. In 2009, Schwennesen began his tenure with ODOT as an Engineer in Training. Since then, he held roles in Bridge; Traffic; Maintenance in ITS and Fiber Optics; Environmental Programs and Rail.

Schwennesen earned his Bachelors of Science and Masters of Science in Civil Engineering from the University of Oklahoma. Additionally, he gained his professional engineering license in 2012. Having worked as a manager and designer in a diverse group of ODOT divisions, Schwennesen is prepared to lead Multi-Modal & Planning as it seeks to improve Oklahoma’s alternative forms of transportation.

BRITT E. SMITH, P.E., F.NSPE, received a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering from the Missouri University of Science and Technology. He began his career with MECO Engineering as a civil engineer and project manager. Later, he continued his work as a staff engineer for the City of Jefferson and then the Missouri Department of Conservation. Currently, Britt is the operations divisions director for the Department of Public Works in Jefferson City where he oversees the operations of the streets, parking, central maintenance, and airport divisions.

Prior to beginning his career as an engineer, he was commissioned as an officer in the Missouri Army National Guard in the aviation branch. He received training as a helicopter pilot at Fort Rucker, Alabama where he completed the training as an honor graduate. He was a member of the Missouri Army National Guard for eight years.

Britt is an active member of both the National and Missouri Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE/MSPE). He has held various positions with the state society including that of state president. On the national level, he was named a Fellow in NSPE in 2016, he is a past member of the NSPE House of Delegates. Britt is the currently the past president of the NSPE Board of Directors.

Britt is also a member of the American Public Works Association (APWA). He has served on various committees in APWA.

His family includes his wife, Candy, three adult children: Glenn, Hannah, and Grace, a border collie named Roxie, and various foster dogs.
Bill Smith is President of Hydropower International Services Inter-National Consultancy, L.L.C., (HISINC, LLC) a private consulting firm providing engineering and consulting services for hydroelectric generating projects, and other hydrologic, hydraulic, and floodplain and stormwater management projects. He is currently the Floodplain Administrator in six (6) rural Oklahoma communities and is the Assistant City Engineer for the City of Beggs, Oklahoma.

Rev. Smith is a Past Chair of the Oklahoma Floodplain Managers Association and is Coordinator of the OFMA Disaster Response Team. He has been involved in stormwater and floodplain management for 50 years. He is a Senior FEMA/EMI Instructor. Smith also established and implemented an MS4 Program in the Town of Kiefer when it first was required to participate. Smith is also a Past President of the National Hydropower Association.

Mindy Stitt is the Executive Director of the Oklahoma Energy Resources Board (OERB). Prior to her current position, she was the Assistant Director, overseeing OERB’s statewide student education programs. Mindy became one of the organization’s first employees in 1994. She was previously employed by Brown and Borelli, Inc., an independent oil and natural gas company.

Mindy attended Southwestern Oklahoma State University, majoring in elementary education. In 1998, her efforts in energy education earned her the Governor’s Commendation for Public Service. In 2006, The Journal Record honored Mindy as one of the top 50 women making a difference in the State of Oklahoma.

She has served on the Jasmine Moran Children’s Museum Board of Directors and the OKC Area Salvation Army Advisory Board.

Eric Waggoner, P.E. is a Transportation Engineer and project manager in Freese and Nichols’ Oklahoma City office. His experience includes projects for both the state and municipalities focusing on roadway, traffic and storm drain design. Eric serves as the Oklahoma Society of Professional Engineers Central/Southwest Chapter Representative. Eric graduated from Oklahoma State University with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering and has been with FNI since graduation. Eric enjoys taking vacations with his wife, Alexis, and spending time with their almost one-year old, Weston, while balancing that time and golfing with his friends.
Richard Willoughby, P.E. F.NSPE graduated from Oklahoma State University, with a Bachelor’s of Science in Biosystems Engineering in 1998, and a Master’s of Science in Biosystems Engineering in 2001.

He started his career at The Charles Machine Works (CMW), manufacturer of the Ditch Witch product line in 2000. Richard began working as a Design Engineer in the Trencher Design Group, focusing primarily on trenching attachments from product from creation of design specs, through prototyping, testing, production start-up, and market introduction. In 2010, Richard was promoted to Senior Design Engineer, continuing to work on trenchers, vibratory plows, rock saws, backhoes, and a variety of other attachments. Richard additionally supports CAD software update testing, custom products development, electronic BOM process work, risk assessment, FEA, and standards compliance.

In addition to his work at CMW, Richard has been active in the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers, the Oklahoma Society of Professional Engineers, and the National Society of Professional Engineers serving in numerous committees and board positions. In 2009-2010, he served as President of OSPE and has served as Vice President of Education for OSPE from 2013-2020. In 2017, he was elected as a Fellow member of NSPE. Since June of 2020, Richard has served on the State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors.

Richard resides in Guthrie with his wife Shellie, and son Andrew. He is also active as a board member of the Guthrie Little League Baseball. In addition, he serves as a Merit Badge Counselor and Assistant Scoutmaster for Troop #850 of Boy Scouts and is an adult member of the Order of the Arrow. Richard is also involved with the Guthrie JROTC Booster Club, Soccer Booster Club, and Sons of the American Legion.