Research at IIT
Looking Toward the Future with Pride in the Past

By Dennis Roberson
Vice Provost for Research

Illinois Institute of Technology has a long history of contributing to a wide variety of research areas. From a quantitative perspective, under the leadership of my predecessor, Vice Provost for Research Ali Cinar, academic research grant volume doubled over the last eight academic years from $20 million in 2005 to $40.5 million in 2013. A goal of the IIT Strategic Plan is to grow our academic research grant volume by roughly 50 percent over the next five years to $60 million.

Our current research contributions and planned growth are built on the quality and dedication of our faculty, several of whom are featured in this issue of IIT Magazine. Their deep knowledge, great insight, creativity, and persistence are the driving force behind our research success.

Our research effort needs the strong support, high energy, and growing skill set of a large and talented cadre of graduate, and in some cases undergraduate, research assistants. This group performs the majority of the direct research tasks in the laboratory, in the field, and so often in our modern research environment, on the computer. Our success is also dependent upon the dedicated efforts of many individuals in university staff functions, including those in each of the colleges and the administrative offices, especially Finance (in particular, Grant and Contract Accounting) and Research.

The scope of our research pursuits is important. From its beginnings, IIT has been a pragmatic, results-oriented institution. Much of our research is focused on understanding and resolving today’s real-world problems whose solutions will improve humanity over a relatively short period of a decade or so. In some instances, the impact will be felt in only a few years.

We seek to expand our ability to function successfully as research teams and as interdisciplinary teams. We are focused on enhancing our collaboration with researchers at other universities and look to increase and further elevate our collaborative efforts with such government agencies as Argonne National Laboratory and Fermilab.

Finally, we need to expand our engagement with key commercial enterprises ranging from global corporate giants to entrepreneurial startups in our University Technology Park as well as our local communities. Positive relationships with these groups will accelerate the impact of our discoveries as they are translated into policies, products, and services that will improve lives across the planet.

These are exciting times for research at IIT. I hope that as you read this magazine you will catch the excitement, feel a sense of pride in the contributions that have already been made, and look with anticipation toward the future.