



Seminar  
Friday, September 26, 2008, 3:30 – 4:30 pm  
112 Brackett Hall

### **The Culture of Engineering Education: Looking beneath the observable**

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In recent years the concept of “culture” has increasingly entered the engineering education discourse in the context of strategising for desired cultural changes, and the implications of disciplinary and institutional cultures for recruitment and retention particularly of women and minority students. This discourse carries with it the implicit assumption that engineering education has a distinct and recognisable culture. In many instances, however, engineering educators have continued to focus on the characteristics of the behaviors and practices, “what is and what they should be” rather than the values, beliefs and assumptions which underpin “how they came to be”. This presentation will discuss a set of proposed dimensions of the engineering education culture, and the processes by which that culture is learned and sustained, based on a model designed to be accessible to engineering educators. This model provides a framework to discuss questions such as:

- What common understandings do we share about the engineering education culture?
- How do we ensure that students, learning what it means to be engineers, understand and identify with the values and ideals we aspire to?
- Can we identify and clarify differences between sub-disciplinary and institutional cultures?
- What do we need to know in order to effect cultural change?
- Is it possible to measure culture change?

#### **Presenter Biography**



Elizabeth Godfrey is currently on sabbatical at the Center for the Advancement of Scholarship on Engineering Education in Washington DC, after ten years as the Associate Dean for Undergraduates at the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. Her career has also included university lecturing, high school teaching and 10 years as an advocate for Women in Science and Engineering. Complementing her personal research interest in the culture of engineering education and gender issues, she is also currently working with colleagues in projects associated with the First Year Experience, Recruitment and Attrition, and stimulating the engagement of academic staff in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. She has strong links to the Australasian Association for Engineering Education, for which she is the current Vice president.

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