CRUZ-NEIRA NAMED NEW MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF ENGINEERING

Dr. Carolina Cruz-Neira, director of the Emerging Analytics Center and interim chair of the Department of Computer Science at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, has been elected as a new member of the National Academy of Engineering for her contributions to immersive visualization.

“Dr. Cruz-Neira contributes in many ways, and this recognition is well deserved. She is the only UA Little Rock person to ever receive this honor and one of only a few in the state,” said Dr. Lawrence Whitman, dean of the UA Little Rock Donaghey College of Engineering and Information Technology. “This award recognizes her contributions to the field of engineering and computer science, and we are fortunate to have her as a leader in our college.”

Election to the National Academy of Engineering is among the highest professional distinctions accorded to an engineer. Academy membership honors those who have made outstanding contributions to “engineering research, practice, or education, including, where appropriate, significant contributions to the engineering literature” and to “the pioneering of new and developing fields of technology, making major advancements in traditional fields of engineering, or developing/implementing innovative approaches to engineering education.”

Cruz-Neira is among 83 new members and 16 foreign members from the Class of 2018 who were announced on Feb. 7. The newly elected class will be formally inducted during a ceremony at the academy’s annual meeting in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 30.

Among the fellow inductees include Mary Barra, CEO and chairman of General Motors Co., Jeff Bezos, CEO and president of Amazon.com Inc., Diane Greene, CEO of Google Cloud, Google Inc., and Dennis Muilenburg, CEO of Boeing Co.
More about Carolina Cruz-Neira:

Cruz-Neira, world-renowned inventor of the CAVE virtual environment, leads UA Little Rock’s Emerging Analytics Center for faculty, researchers, and students exploring advanced applications of virtual reality, mixed reality, and visualization.

She uses a wide range of virtual and augmented reality technologies for applications to give industries a competitive edge and to provide several government branches more effective training. She also promotes computer science work and research in education, including computer science programs in public schools. In September and October 2017, the Emerging Analytics Center participated in the TechStart Partnership between Facebook and the state of Arkansas to generate student interest in computer science education and careers.

In January, she was invited by Dell to participate in the “VR for Good” panel at the 2018 Consumer Electronics Show to demonstrate how innovators are using virtual reality to make a positive impact on society. Cruz-Neira demonstrated the Anatomic Eyes Project, an interactive cadaver dissection where users can dissect a life-size cadaver using simple pinch gestures. The technology has the capability to greatly transform medical education and research. Dell also invited her to participate in an upcoming panel at the Sundance Film Festival to talk about the positive impact of virtual reality on human life.

Cruz-Neira has been recognized as one of the top 25 virtual reality innovators by the gaming website Polygon as well as one of the three greatest female innovators in virtual reality by University Herald.

She holds a bachelor’s degree in systems engineering, cum laude, from the Universidad Metropolitana as well as a master’s degree and a Ph.D. in electrical engineering and computer science, both from the University of Illinois at Chicago, where she specialized in virtual reality, visual analytics, and computations steering research.
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