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College of Engineering and Applied Sciences

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The CEAS issues its own brown and gold coin to make connections

The College of Engineering and Applied Sciences has struck its own brown and gold coin to connect with and form bonds among its alums, friends, staff, and faculty.

Last January at the CEAS All-Hands Meeting, all members of the CEAS team received the new CEAS coin, which is approximately 1.75 inches in diameter.

CEAS Dean Tony Vizzini, who came to the CEAS last fall, introduced the CEAS brown and gold coin as a way to make connections. “Make sure you carry the brown and gold coin at all times,” he said. “We want you to show your connectivity to the college.”

The officially dedicated coin’s head is the Western Michigan University seal and CEAS logo is its tail. “Having a coin is a way to show that you belong to what’s on this coin,” Vizzini said. “It’s shiny and it stands out, and you can lay it on your desk.”

Vizzini explained that the idea of having a unique coin to connect a team comes from the military, where challenge coins date back to World War I. Before the US entered that war, a wealthy American Air Force pilot from New Jersey had coins struck for members of his flying squadron. They carried the coins to show their solidarity.

The pilot wore his in a leather sack around his neck. When he was shot down and captured by the Germans, his papers were confiscated, but not his coin. He escaped from the Germans and headed for France, where he was immediately captured by the French who thought he was a German saboteur. He was scheduled to be executed until the French noticed the coin he wore around his neck and recognized the squadron symbol.

When his story checked out that he was an American flying with the British, the French gave him a bottle of wine instead of executing him. “The coin saved his life, and he was benefitted by receiving an adult beverage,” Vizzini told the audience. “So carrying the coin could save your life, and it could also get you an adult beverage.”

The members of the flying squad agreed to carry their coins at all times and to challenge others to do the same. If a coin-carrying member challenged another to show his coin, the other had to either show the coin or buy the challenger a drink. If the challenge was met, then the challenger had to buy the drink.

“I carry mine all the time,” Vizzini said. “We want all of us here and all of our alums and friends to carry their coins all the time.”

The new coins were handed to each Spring 2010 CEAS graduate in a handshake. “When you hand it to someone, give it to them in your palm,” Vizzini said. “It’s a way of connecting.”

To get the coins to all CEAS alums, Vizzini told the CEAS faculty, administrators, and staff, “If you meet an alum who doesn’t have one of our coins, give him yours and we’ll give you another one.”

The coin was designed by Laura Decker, CEAS finance analyst.

Send your thoughts or suggestions for future topics to the editor at jerrie.fiala@wmich.edu Thank you.