

## **FIE reflection - David Freeman**

FIE was the first academic conference that I have attended, so it was the first one that I presented at as well. During the months leading up to the conference, as the team was working out ways to translate our paper into an engaging presentation, I was expecting the experience of crafting and then sharing a presentation to be the most significant aspect of the conference experience. I was coming out of this place of being uncomfortable with my public-speaking skills (probably because so many people at Olin are very skilled presenters), and knew that FIE was an opportunity to really work on developing confidence in my abilities. Other than that, I had *no* idea what to expect from our 5-day trip.

We started things off by sharing our presentation on the first morning of the conference. Although I was clearly nervous when going through my portion of the slides, our audience responded with lots of affirmation and interesting thoughts. I didn't feel like I did the best I could've done, but I did feel like this experience was a valuable step towards being someone who can skillfully communicate my thoughts to an audience. Sitting through the other presentations in our session, it was valuable to notice how naturally the other presenters shared their thoughts, that there is room in these sorts of academic environments to present discoveries and noteworthy idea without performing. Granted, we did go into the crafting of our presentation with the explicit intention for it to be performative, to shake up the audience's ideas of what is possible in an academic presentation, but it was good to be grounded in the reality that there are much more casual ways to navigate these situations as well.

Throughout the following days of attending presentations, poster sessions, and special sessions I was continuously inspired by all the ways that it is possible to share academic work/thoughts with others. During the afternoon of our first day at the conference, we attended a special session led in-part by Olin alum Mel Chua, which set me in such a perfect mindset to continue through the conference with open eyes and intentional conversation. The session, which featured a mock-presentation, dramatized tech-centered conversation, small-group discussion, and large-group discussion, actively subverted the academic approach of unemotional distancing. I had been uncomfortable with how some of the presentations that we'd attended earlier in the day kept their distance from the subject, defining a line between the presenting researchers and the datafied subjects of their work. Mel Chua's group's presentation reminded me that you don't have to fit within that depersonalized form to contribute to academic/creative/constructive thought.

Since the conference, I have reached out to a few of the folks whose work and mindsets really resonated with me, and I hope to stay in the loop with their future publications. This is really significant for my future years at Olin, since it will keep me on track with groundbreaking, inspiring ways of looking at engineering education. Moving through the spaces of our school while considering the pedagogical implications of various elements helps me stay engaged as an active member of our community.

