

Karen A. Thole Bio

Dr. Karen A. Thole is a Distinguished Professor and head of the Department of Mechanical Engineering at The Pennsylvania State University. She holds two degrees in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Illinois, and a PhD from the University of Texas at Austin. Upon completing her degrees she spent two years as a post-doctoral researcher at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology after which she held faculty appointments at the University of Wisconsin and Virginia Tech. At Virginia Tech, she also served as an *AdvanceVT* Professor, funded by the National Science Foundation's Advance grant in which she was a co-PI. As the Department head, her administrative and educational efforts have focused on significantly growing the faculty, diversifying the faculty and students, and emphasizing interdisciplinary research. During her tenure as the Department Head, she hired 39 faculty in mechanical engineering of which 40% of those hires were from under-represented groups. Dr. Thole successfully led the effort to establish an online Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering and the development and approval of a Master of Science (resident) / Master of Engineering (online) in Additive Manufacturing and Design, which was the first such degree offered in the United States. Dr. Thole has been recognized for her efforts in mechanical engineering education and diversity as a U.S. White House *Champion of Change*, and by ASME's Edwin F. Church Medal, ABET's Claire L. Felbinger Diversity Award, and SWE's Distinguished Engineering Educator Award. She has also been recognized for her faculty mentoring efforts through Penn State's Rosemary Schraer Mentoring Award and Howard B. Palmer Faculty Mentoring Award.