

## Message from the General Chair

On behalf of the Iowa State University I welcome you all to be the enthusiastic participants of this very special international gathering. We are here to continue forging a concerned community to address critical issues pertaining to the wellbeing of our parents, friends, neighbors, physically challenged citizens, and the emerging and fast graying baby-boomers. For many scientists, engineers, and technologists, it is our collective responsibilities to develop and deploy tested cutting-edge tools and techniques to help people. For health-care professionals, policy makers, and social workers, the conference provides a golden opportunity to have the first-hand experience with what is upcoming on the horizon that will become highly relevant to your profession, and interact and receive technical information from true experts in the field. Oftentimes the audience of smart home technologies happens to be someone who are dear to us. That may help explain why so many researchers are very much passionate about their research work. Indeed, the conference theme this year is "Enhancing the Quality of Life for Rural Elders."

ICOST started in 2003 and has gained significant momentum and prestige. We witnessed that many prominent researchers and professionals from around the world in this cross-disciplinary research area worked together and invested their precious time to make each year's event a great success: Paris (2003), Singapore (2004), Canada (2005), Ireland (2006), and Nara, Japan (2007). This year, we are privileged to be able to host this event in Ames, Iowa, USA. Organizing an international conference entails a lot of work and team work. We are fortunate to have a strong team of voluntary and professional workers. I thank each one of them for the outstanding job. In particular, I thank Peter Martin, Mary Yearns, and Jennifer Margrett, who played an integral role of every piece of program development.

I would like to take this opportunity to express special thanks to the following sponsoring and supporting entities. Dr. John Brighton, Vice Provost for Research and Economic Development at Iowa State University, provided the leadership to come up a significant joint grant that made this conference financially viable. Drs. David Oliver and Michael Whiteford, who provided partial funding from ISU, deserves my sincere appreciation for their continuous encouragement to support the Smart Home initiative at ISU. Karin Ford, representing the Iowa Department of Public Health-Office of Disability and Health, will host the Welcome Reception in the elegant Christian Petersen Museum. Thanks also to the ICOST 2008 Local Steering Committee from the State of Iowa, who played a critical role in every stage of the planning and publicity.

Finally, Drs. Mounir Mokhtari and Tatsuya Yamazaki, and other senior volunteers serving on the scientific committee, provided the strong support, encouragement, and shared their experience in organizing this event. Their network helped pull in many submissions, and, of course, we cannot accommodate them all. Drs. Sumi Helal and Johnny Wong expertly handled every details of technical program development. To them, I owe a lot.

To you all – this is your conference. Enjoy it and have a most memorable stay in Ames, Iowa.

Carl K. Chang  
General Chair, ICOST 2008