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PREFACE

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The Tenth Pan American Congress of Applied Mechanics (PACAM X) was held January 7–11, 2008 in Cancún, Mexico. Its aim, like that of its predecessors, was to promote progress in the broad field of mechanics, including composite materials, computational mechanics, controls, dynamics, fluid mechanics, sensors and monitoring, and solid and structural mechanics. Previous meetings have been held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (1989), Valparaiso, Chile (1991), São Paulo, Brazil (1993), Buenos Aires, Argentina (1995), San Juan, Puerto Rico (1997), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (1999), Temuco, Chile (2002), Havana, Cuba (2004), and Mérida, Mexico (2006). This Tenth PACAM, like the previous gatherings, remains the only conference sponsored by the American Academy of Mechanics (AAM).

PACAM X lived up to its goal of exposing engineers, scientists, and advanced graduate students to new research methods, developments, problems, and potential collaborative opportunities in all the areas mentioned, and provided broad opportunities for personal interactions through means of formal presentations and informal conversations. Participation was not limited to researchers in North, Central and South America; in fact, the PACAM conferences enable individuals to engage with scholars from all over the world during a time when there are few other competing conferences.

A sincere acknowledgment is extended to the National Science Foundation (NSF) for their support of this conference and specifically to Ken Chong at NSF for helping to support several participants and to AAM. Approximately 110 international participants were able to enjoy a very productive gathering in Cancún. The gathering was held at the beautiful Grand Oasis Resort.

Following PACAM X, authors of selected talks were asked to submit extended full-length papers related to their presentation at the conference. The selected papers were then subjected to the normal, peer-review process, and the papers of the best quality were included in this special issue of the *Journal of Mechanics of Materials and Structures*. I thank the Editor-in-Chief and Associate Editor of JoMMS, Charles and Marie-Louise Steele, for the great opportunity to organize this special issue; the individual authors for their excellent contributions; and the anonymous reviewers who put forth a fantastic and detailed effort in helping to choose the best papers for this special issue.

Lastly, in this anxious time for my family, I wish to thank from the bottom of my heart my parents, Constantine and Sofia Attard, for their unwavering support of my career and aspirations in life. Without their unconditional love, nothing in my world would have been possible. Σ'αγαπώ, μπαμπά.

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