Dr. Saito Retires after 21 years at Brigham Young University

After 21 years of being on the faculty of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering of BYU, Dr. Mitsuru Saito has chosen to respectfully step down from his current position to retire. During his time at BYU, Dr. Saito has made many advancements in his personal career, as well as within the department itself. He has been instrumental for rejuvenating the transportation-engineering program at BYU and is currently the founding director of the BYU Transportation Lab.

Dr. Saito was born and raised in Japan where he received a diploma in Civil Engineering from the Gunma National Technical College (GNTC) in Japan. After having graduated from GNTC, he worked for one of the top civil engineering consulting companies in Japan for five years as a bridge design engineer. While he was working in Indonesia on a highway and bridge improvement project, he decided that he should become a transportation engineer. He left the company and came to Brigham Young University (BYU) in 1978 to study transportation engineering. He received his BS degree from BYU in 1981, MS degree from the University of Virginia in 1983, and PhD from Purdue University in 1988, all in civil engineering. His graduate studies focused on transportation engineering, especially in the area of traffic flow theory, traffic operations and transportation infrastructure management.

Dr. Saito began publishing technical papers while he was a graduate student at University of Virginia. He was the first recipient of the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) International Student Paper contest in 1983. Since then, Dr. Saito has published 100+ technical papers and made numerous presentations in the field of traffic engineering, traffic operation, traffic safety, transportation planning, and infrastructure management. He has been on the faculty of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering of BYU since the fall semester of 1997; he has been a tenured full professor at BYU since September 2001. Prior to his employment at BYU, he worked as an assistant and tenured associate professor at the City University of New York from 1988 to 1997. Dr. Saito has been instrumental for rejuvenating the transportation-engineering program at BYU. He overhauled the structure of transportation engineering program and updated its course contents. He is the founding director of the BYU Transportation Lab. He has worked on numerous studies funded by the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) as well as other external funding sources. He also participated in the transportation portion of the Mexico Study Abroad program and accompanied students to the University of Zacatecas and the University of Guanajuato.

He has been actively involved in many activities of professional organizations including the Transportation Research Board, American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). He is currently a fellow member of ASCE and ITE. He is the recipient of the 2009 Frank M. Masters Transportation Engineering Award from ASCE for his innovative research and teaching in transportation engineering. In addition, he received the 2017...
ITE Utah Chapter Educator of the Year award and the 2018 Trailblazer award from UDOT. He is currently chair of the Transportation and Mobility Advisory Committee (TMAC) of Provo.

Dr. Saito says he has enjoyed teaching and conducting research at BYU. He believes that the best reward for being an educator is to be able to see his students doing well and moving up ladders in their careers. His post-retirement plans include traveling with his wife Yasuko (who is a full-time lecturer of Japanese language and the Director of the Japanese language program at Utah Valley University) to visit as many UNESCO’s world heritage sites as possible, spending more time in music and languages and getting involved in humanitarian work. Starting fall 2018, he will be providing voluntary work to the World Road Association-PIARC (Permanent International Association of Road Congresses) based in Paris, France that serves 121 member countries. Using his transportation knowledge and language skills (English, Japanese, French and Spanish) he will provide service to the PIARC’s Committee for Terminology (CTERM) as an editor for the Japanese language in the PIARC Road Dictionary.