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Attracting the Best and Brightest

COLUMBIA, SC - September 16, 2009 - CoEE chairs, academic programs bring top students to South Carolina; build the state's next generation of scientists and engineers.

The CoEE Program recruits top-tier researchers to develop South Carolina's strengths in an array of technology-based fields. These researchers—called CoEE endowed chairs—benefit the state by moving their research to South Carolina and leading cutting-edge academic programs at Clemson, MUSC, and USC. The star power of the CoEE endowed chairs attracts the best and brightest students who have their pick of the nation's leading universities. These graduate students are the next generation of scientists and engineers. Having this talent in South Carolina will help the state attract world-class companies and the high-paying, knowledge-based jobs that these companies create.



The Clemson University International Center for Automotive Research (CU-ICAR) hosts an automotive engineering graduate program that is supported by the CoEE Program. The Carroll A. Campbell Jr. Graduate Engineering Center at Clemson offers the nation's only doctoral degree in automotive engineering.

John Limroth (above right) worked as an engineer for 10 years before he decided to come to CU-ICAR in 2006 to pursue his Ph.D. in automotive engineering. The Texas native cites the presence of CoEE Endowed Chair Dr. Thomas Kurfess as a big draw. During the decade that Limroth worked in industry, he had become familiar with Kurfess' work. "The endowed chairs are strong and knowledgeable," Limroth says.

In addition to his role as BMW Endowed Chair in Manufacturing, Kurfess directs the graduate engineering programs at CU-ICAR. Other CU-ICAR endowed chairs are Dr. Todd Hubing, Michelin Endowed Chair in Vehicular Electronic Systems Integration; Dr. John Ziegert, Timken Endowed Chair in Automotive Design and Development; and Dr. Paul Venhovens, BMW Endowed Chair in Systems Integration.



Student **Evan Lowe** (left) agrees that professors can make the difference when a student is choosing between prospective schools. Lowe, originally from Michigan, is also in the automotive engineering Ph.D. program.

"The first time I inquired about Clemson's Automotive Engineering program, Dr. Kurfess got back to me in about 15 minutes after I emailed

him—and he was in Turkey at the time,” recalls Lowe, who had been considering Virginia Tech and the University of Michigan, where he received his undergraduate degree.

Lowe says that South Carolina and the CU-ICAR program made an excellent impression on him when he came to visit.

“We have several facilities all under one roof and state-of-the-art equipment,” he says. “Usually you have to travel far to go to the kind of test facilities that are sought after by OEMs [Original Equipment Manufacturers]. They are usually not all under the same roof.”

“The professors were warm and welcoming,” Lowe adds.

Lowe says he is impressed with the program’s curriculum and its international focus, which includes instruction in business subject matter as well as in engineering, and requires students to learn a foreign language.

“The curriculum integrates business ideas, team-working, and globalization, so we will graduate as better engineers with those additional skills,” says Lowe.

Limroth lists the opportunities to interact with CU-ICAR’s private industry partners, both on joint research projects and through networking, as another advantage of the program.

Lowe and Limroth both view being part of a new academic program as a positive.

“It was an opportunity to be involved on the ground floor of something new and different,” says Limroth. “That was a big draw.”

Lowe also believes that the newness of the program makes it attractive for students who enjoy being “pioneers,” helping to shape the program’s future.

“Because the program is new, I have had an opportunity to be part of its growth,” says Lowe. “I have been able to have influence as it develops. That is an opportunity you don’t often get.”

Lowe believes that he has learned a lot about leadership. “I have been able to start a lot of new initiatives and have a lot of influence. “This program is not just training me to be a good engineer technically, but in other ways as well.”

After graduation, Lowe plans to go into the private sector and work in research and design. He also sees himself as a future lecturer, passing on what he has learned to the next generation. Lowe says he has been particularly influenced by a class he took with Dr. Tim Rhyne, whom he calls one of the most prominent engineers for Michelin worldwide.

Limroth has similar plans. "I would like to go into an R&D position in the auto industry," he says, "with the goal of possibly returning to an academic setting down the road."

Limroth says he would be interested in staying in the state if opportunities are here. "We have really enjoyed living in South Carolina and are definitely open to staying here."

Limroth believes the program has prepared him for his future by giving him the strong technical background that companies are looking for, along with knowledge of the industry.

"Wherever I go next, with the training I've received, I believe I'll be able to step in and be successful."