

Journal and Courier

Estimated printed pages: 3

September 16, 2006

Section: LOCAL

Page: 4B

Gifts to benefit mechanical engineering

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JOURNAL // COURIER

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Two separate gifts to Purdue University's department of mechanical engineering totaling \$3.25 million could have major implications for the automotive industry and energy independence.

Gifts expected to be announced today from Cummins Inc., an engine manufacturer in Columbus, totaling \$1.75 million will support an endowed professorship in mechanical engineering as well as new lab space in the Ray W. Herrick Laboratories.

A former Purdue professor, Gene Goodson, and his wife, Susie, have also donated \$1.5 million toward an additional endowed position.

"Certainly the challenge we're facing with energy and the environment are things everybody is thinking about," said Greg Shaver, an assistant professor of mechanical engineering.

"There are new tricks you can teach the internal combustion engine. You can do more to optimize the combustion process, which makes it both cleaner and more efficient."

The two professorships bring mechanical engineering's endowed positions to 13. In 1999, the department had only three named professorships, often used by universities to recruit and maintain top faculty and establish relationships with industry leaders.

John Wall, vice president and chief technical officer of Cummins, said that while the company has long supported emission and noise reduction research at Purdue regarding diesel engines, he looks forward to the partnership.

"The work we've done has been around engine controls and power train integration. We've done some exhaust after-treatment work for emission controls, engine friction studies and fuel systems and noise work," Wall said. "This just allows us to have a more integrated approach."

Patricia Davies, director of Herrick Labs, said the new space will allow department members to work with both graduate and undergraduate students on testing of large engine concepts in a safe and flexible environment.

"We're getting much closer to something that really can be put in a working vehicle," Davies said. "But your requirements to make one thing work well could be in conflict with another component. It's always very important to be able to test the entire system, where you can look at the tradeoffs and try to get the best capability out of each system."

Goodson, a former mechanical engineering professor and Purdue alumnus, said his decision to support a named professorship sprung from what he enjoyed doing most while at the university.

"Having been a professor, I came to believe that a chaired professorship was the best job at the university and anything above and below it was worse, literally," Goodson joked.

"My wife and I decided that rather than (giving to Purdue) in our will, we'd like to do something with warm hands rather than cold ones."

Details

The Cummins' gift provides \$750,000 for the Cummins Professor of Mechanical Engineering. The gift is matched by the Goodwin Challenge, a \$15 million estate gift from alumnus George Goodwin aimed at creating 20 endowed professorships.

It matches every \$750,000 gift to create the \$1.5 million chairs.

For more, visit the following Web sites:

me.www.ecn.purdue.edu/ME/

www.cummins.com

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