Empower Extraordinary success

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The college seeks more scholarships and endowed chairs as it hits Empower Extraordinary milestone

The Michigan State University College of Engineering has reached its goal for the Empower Extraordinary capital campaign and continues to propel forward.

“This is unprecedented support for our college and its students,” said Engineering Dean Leo Kempel. “The college has surpassed its goal of $80 million more than a year early, thanks to our devoted alumni and friends. This campaign total doesn’t mean we’ve reached an end,” Kempel continued. “We still need more endowed faculty positions and we must continue to raise funds for undergraduate scholarships, but it is time for a collective cheer.”

Kempel said undergraduate scholarships are vital to attracting and retaining bright students, regardless of their ability to pay. Currently the college distributes almost $830,000 in undergraduate scholarship support each year, or an average of about $800 a year for returning students on a college scholarship.

“In the face of around $25,000 costs in tuition, room, board and fees a year for engineering students, this just isn’t enough,” Kempel said. “In conversations with our alumni, I am constantly reminded that the College of Engineering provided them the opportunity to thrive and succeed in life. We need to partner with donors to make sure that this and future generations of Spartan Engineers have similar opportunities.”

Stephen Bates, senior director of development and alumni relations, noted the college’s success in raising endowed and annual giving funds to support its rapidly growing academic programs and student body.

“Donor investments have helped us bring in 10 new endowed faculty positions for the college – which will help us secure the talent we need to train tomorrow’s problem-solvers,” Bates said. “We will continue to strive to obtain more endowed faculty positions for the rest of the campaign and beyond.”

Kempel concurred, “It is our hope that we’ll receive commitments for another 10 newly endowed faculty positions before the end of the campaign. I challenge my fundraising team and the college’s alumni to make that happen.”
Two endowed faculty members are now on campus and having an impact because of funds raised during the current Empower Extraordinary campaign. Wolfgang Banzhaf, a renowned computer scientist, became the first to hold the John R. Koza Endowed Chair in Genetic Programming in 2016. He was joined in 2017 by the first holder of the David L. and Denise M. Lamp Endowed Chair in Chemical Engineering—John Dorgan, an expert in polymeric materials and composites.

Among alumni leaders since the campaign began are Betty Shanahan, a 1978 graduate in electrical engineering, and her husband, Bob Nuber, a 1978 graduate in computer science and Honors College. They have established a $1.3 million bequest in 2015 to create an endowed faculty position in entrepreneurship and diversity.

Today, Shanahan is chair of the college’s alumni board and an active campaign volunteer.

“Reaching this fundraising milestone is an indication of the appreciation that fellow alumni and others have for the impact the college has had on our careers and society in general,” Shanahan said. “More importantly, donors see as I do, the extraordinary effect this campaign has on our students and faculty, who are continuing the legacy of Spartan engineers, which is ultimately improving the quality of life for people in Michigan, throughout the nation, and globally.”

Kempel noted that part of the college’s celebration includes thanking those who helped achieve the goal. “I congratulate Stephen and his team for their exceptional work, and I am very grateful to the alumni and donors who helped us arrive at this point in history. There’s more work to do and we take these next steps with renewed excitement.”

The College of Engineering joins a handful of MSU colleges that have already reached fundraising goals established when MSU launched its $1.5 billion Empower Extraordinary public campaign in 2014. The campaign is scheduled to conclude in 2018.

Donors seeking more information on how to make a gift to College of Engineering, call the Office of Development at (517) 355-8339, or e-mail us at egrdevel@egr.msu.edu.

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