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A retired Michigan State University professor has made a $1 million commitment to benefit the MSU College of Engineering with a professorship in electromagnetics.

The gift is being established through an estate plan from Dennis P. Nyquist of East Lansing, a former faculty member and graduate of the MSU Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering.

“Both the college and ECE department were instrumental in my professional growth, so I am delighted to support MSU and advance electromagnetics with this gift,” Nyquist said. “As a retired faculty member, I appreciate the value and prestige that endowed positions bring by attracting and retaining top quality faculty members to the college.”

MSU President Lou Anna K. Simon said the gift will help Michigan State step up its competitiveness and nourish its culture of high performance.

“Endowed chairs and professorships give our deans and leaders a powerful means of attracting the next generation of MSU faculty,” she said. “Our faculty members are the essential resources in all that we do. We are grateful to Professor Nyquist not only for all his years of service that helped make MSU a top university today but also for his generous investment in MSU’s future.”

Endowed professorships and chair positions are the highest level of faculty distinction. The support from an endowment provides a dependable, perpetual source of funding to support the position, as well as the ability to conduct research and scholarship as new opportunities arise.

“As a distinguished faculty member, Dennis brought both vision and passion to his dedicated work for MSU and this college,” said Leo Kempel, dean of the MSU College of Engineering, who himself was mentored by Nyquist as a junior faculty member. “These kinds of endowed positions are crucial in recruiting and developing faculty members who can uphold Dennis’ profound legacy of professional contributions and the highest level of scholarship.”

ECE Professor Edward Rothwell explained that Nyquist has that special combination of talents that all faculty members wish for. “He is an exceptional teacher, both inspirational and motivational, encouraging his students to reach outside
their comfort zones and discover their true potential. He is a caring and dedicated mentor to his graduate students, preparing them to be technical leaders and innovators. And he is a researcher who is respected by his peers for his rigor and creative solutions to difficult theoretical problems.

“We benefited from his wisdom and gracious nature, and are far better people for it,” Rothwell added. “I'm thrilled that he will continue to have a positive impact on the college through his generous donation.”

Shanker Balasubramaniam, ECE professor and associate chair for graduate studies, said he knew of Nyquist before coming to MSU.

“It was a consequence of my extensive interaction with an MSU graduate who later became a faculty member at a highly ranked institution. This gentleman would constantly refer to ‘Nyquist Notes’ for a variety of questions as we stumbled through research. So, the reputation of his notes preceded him,” Balasubramaniam said.

“I have spent hours discussing teaching strategies given that I inherited both his ‘notes’ and some of the courses that he had developed. He taught us how to nurture talent, and instilled in all of us a love for rigor in research, a sense of responsibility to our immediate peers, and developed a collaborative atmosphere in the group that exists to this day. We are better teachers and researchers thanks to our interaction with him, and I am thrilled that he will continue his positive impact,” Balasubramaniam added.

Stephen Bates, senior director of university development and alumni relations in the MSU College of Engineering said a bequest is a great tool to manage assets and creating a lasting contribution to their alma mater. “Dennis understands the needs of faculty members and knows the importance of stability that a faculty endowment can bring to a department.”

Dennis P. Nyquist
Nyquist is an award-winning faculty member, who served as a faculty member from 1966 to 2002. Among his many honors are the MSU Teacher-Scholar Award in 1969, and the University Distinguished Faculty Award in 1997. Nyquist holds three degrees in electrical engineering: a bachelor’s degree from Lawrence Institute of Technology in 1961, a master’s degree from Wayne State University in 1964 and a PhD from Michigan State University in 1966.

He joined MSU’s faculty in 1966, becoming a full professor in 1979. Along with research interests in electromagnetic interactions in integrated electronics and transient electromagnetics, he has also studied guided wave theory and electromagnetic characterization of materials. He has compiled more than 250 journal and conference publications.

He is a member of the Commission B of Union Radio Scientific International (URSI), Sigma Xi, Tau Beta Phi, and Phi Kappa Phi. His other awards include the John D. Withrow Award for Research Excellence from the MSU College of Engineering in 1996.

Nyquist Endowment
The Nyquist Professorship in Electromagnetics is in conjunction with two other donations: The Lucille P. Nyquist Memorial Endowed Electrical Engineering Graduate Fellowship fund that honors his late mother, and the Dennis P. Nyquist Electromagnetic Research Discretionary Endowment Fund.

The Nyquist Endowment will be managed by MSU’s Office of Investments and Financial Management. Endowments differ from other gifts in that the total amount is invested and a portion of the income will be available for spending each year, while the remainder will be reinvested to grow the fund and safeguard against inflation. MSU’s long-term investment returns have performed ahead of peer institutions. According to a 2013 National Association of College and University Business Officers study, the median college and university investment was 8 percent for the previous 10 years, while MSU’s was 8.6 percent.

Related Website: MSU Today
Communications contact: Patricia Mroczek
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