May 4, 2015

Alum's $5 million bequest to benefit MSU Engineering

A $5 million bequest commitment from a Kentucky couple will strengthen the Michigan State University College of Engineering’s ability to coach, develop and educate the next generation of innovation leaders.

The estate gift from Gary and Patricia Coffman is one of the largest donations ever given to MSU Engineering. It will establish the Gary A. and Patricia A. Coffman Endowed Scholarship/Fellowship, funds that will be split into an endowed scholarship/fellowship fund for talented, qualified students and a discretionary fund for the dean.

“We are grateful for the gift from Gary and Patricia, a commitment that will keep MSU among world leaders in the field of engineering, as well as position us to continue to serve as a global innovation leader,” said MSU President Lou Anna K. Simon. “These are challenging economic times for higher education, and we are pleased the Coffmans have chosen to provide such a generous donation to Gary’s alma mater.”

Gary Coffman said supporting the next generation of engineering leaders is exactly what they had in mind in creating the endowment.

“One of the key things in the engineering field is to establish an environment for others to leverage their capabilities,” he said. “As a leader, you are responsible for providing coaching and development for your employees to stretch and grow. It is my hope to impact students with this gift.”

Coffman was born and raised in the Detroit area. He came to MSU to study engineering and landed an internship at the Ford Motor Co. while a student. At Ford, he was encouraged to be curious about innovation.

“I helped develop and build unique equipment for engine dynamometer testing,” he said. “We worked on the durability and testing of developmental emission controls for early emission controlled vehicles.”

Coffman graduated from MSU in 1974 with a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering and began a 31-year career with Dow Corning.

His responsibilities included a variety of plant management roles. He served as plant manager for the Dow Corning facility in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, from 1998 until his retirement in 2005.

“We’re thrilled to receive this entire commitment from the Coffmans, but the financial flexibility afforded by the endowed discretionary fund is particularly important,” said Leo Kempel, dean of the MSU College of Engineering. “Discretionary funds allow us to take advantage of opportunities to support faculty researchers at critical junctures, implement innovative new programs when other funding sources aren’t available, and to keep improving our student experiences.”

The Coffman’s gift supports Empower Extraordinary, the $1.5 billion campaign for MSU that publicly launched in October 2014.

For more information on the Empower Extraordinary campaign visit http://givingto.msu.edu/college/college-of-engineering.cfm.

The MSU College of Engineering has eight academic departments serving 4,900 undergraduate and more than 800
graduate students through 10 undergraduate and nine graduate degree programs.

For more, visit: www.egr.msu.edu.

Related Website: Empower Extraordinary - Supporting the College of Engineering
Communications contact: Patricia Mroczek

Source URL: https://www.egr.msu.edu/news/2015/05/04/5-million-endowment