New chair in BAE

July 14, 2015

MSU names Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering chair

Darrell W. Donahue has been named chair of the Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering in the Michigan State University (MSU) College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and College of Engineering. His appointment was effective July 1.

Donahue replaces Ajit Srivastava, who stepped down from the role of chairperson and will rejoin the faculty in the Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering.

Donahue most recently served as vice president of operations and research director at Maine Maritime Academy, where he also served as founding research director in the Center for Applied Research and Education. Before that, he was professor of chemical and biological engineering at the University of Maine for 18 years.

“MSU feels like home,” Donahue said. “I grew up with an agricultural background in North Carolina and worked in food- and forestry-related engineering research while in Maine. Coming to MSU allows me to continue in that vein, becoming a leader for food, water and environment issues in Michigan and throughout the world.”

“We welcome Darrell to the College of Engineering family,” said Leo Kempel, dean of the College of Engineering. "We look forward to his leadership of this important enterprise that excels in all aspects of the mission of Michigan State University."

Over the past 20 years, Donahue has served as a consultant for several Fortune 500 companies for his expertise in economic modeling, team development, and operational skills. His statistical and modeling approaches have been used in setting standards for governmental agencies and by the National Academies of Sciences, the Council of Canadian Academies and the FAO of WHO.

Donahue’s research focus is on process engineering systems for food and agriculture. Over the past dozen years, he has added the study of risk assessment modeling to that work.

While at the University of Maine, Donahue also spent a year as a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in the Department of Homeland Security. He is a certified quality engineer.

Every summer since 1996, Donahue has mentored a high school student in his research program.

“In most cases, these students are involved from the early stages of the project, when they can learn and comprehend the study objectives,” Donahue said. “Throughout my career, I have had undergraduates become authors of technical papers -- in some cases, the first author. This is a very rewarding aspect of being in academics. Coming to MSU will enable me to continue that focus on educating people under the Jeffersonian model of higher education.”

Donahue received his doctorate in operations research and engineering, his master’s degree in engineering and mathematics, and a bachelor’s degree in zoology from North Carolina State University.

He originally hails from Mocksville, N.C.

Related Website: MSU College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

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