U.S. taps MSU to advance composites

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Vice President Joe Biden announced Sept. 17 that a second site has been selected for a composite materials research institute in which Michigan State University has taken a lead role.

The large-scale manufacturing facility, that will be part of the Institute for Advanced Composites Manufacturing Innovation, or IACMI, will be located in Detroit’s Corktown neighborhood.

The facility will be staffed and operated by MSU as part of the IACMI focus on composite materials for vehicles.

“Lightweighting is critical to our future...We want to own the 21st century in innovation and composites are a big part of that goal. That’s why we’re making a $40 million investment in composites in the Composites Institute [IACMI] co-locating in a facility in Detroit,” said Vice President Joe Biden, speaking in Detroit.

MSU is leading the light-and-heavy-duty vehicle component of the institute, a 122-member consortium funded by a more than $70 million commitment over five years from the U.S. Department of Energy. The goal of the institute: To advance research and development in field of composite materials.

“This project shows how the government can collaborate with the private sector and Michigan's world-class universities on innovative approaches that will be the future of the auto industry,” Gov. Rick Snyder said. “Michigan is the perfect location for a project that will provide opportunities for collaborative research and the development of new materials that will make cars better worldwide – keeping and growing the number of jobs here.”

Creation of the institute was announced earlier this year by President Barack Obama. Sharing the stage with the president for the announcement was Lawrence Drzal, director of MSU’s Composite Materials and Structures Center.

Drzal, a University Distinguished Professor of chemical engineering and materials science, is serving as director of the IACMI’s Michigan Center of Excellence.

MSU is home to the Composite Materials and Structures Center, as well as the Composite Vehicles Research Center. Both have long been nationally recognized as leaders in the field.

The institute is focusing on advanced fiber-reinforced polymer composites, materials that combine strong fibers with strong plastics that are lighter and stronger than steel.

The advancement of composite-material research is particularly important in the state of Michigan. These materials are crucial to the auto industry, which continues to look for ways to manufacture vehicles that are fuel-efficient and safe.

Composite materials also are important in the development of efficient power generation and the increase of renewable power production.

In Michigan, MSU is the primary academic partner, working closely with corporate partners, including the Dow Chemical Co., Ford Motor Co., TARDEC, General Dynamics Land Systems and many others. In addition, the Michigan Economic Development Corp. has committed to provide $15 million in matching funds to the Michigan portion of the institute.

For more information on the IACMI, visit http://iacmi.org/.
Related Website: Video: Lawrence Drzal on the science of composite materials
Institute for Advanced Composites Manufacturing Innovation
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