Oct. 11, 2016

MSU receives $5 million commitment for engineering scholarships

A graduate of Michigan State University, whose only hope of completing his college education in the 1960s was a scholarship, is paying it forward with a $5.3 million gift to the College of Engineering.

The donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, will use cash and estate planning to commit $5.3 million to an endowed College of Engineering scholarship. A charitable bequest will ensure his generosity serves Spartan engineers in perpetuity at Michigan State.

“We are grateful for his philanthropic leadership at MSU at a critical time when greater investment is needed to build endowed scholarships,” said MSU President Lou Anna K. Simon. “Endowed funds are never depleted, so gifts like this help ensure future generations of Spartans will be as strong and prepared as the last.”

College of Engineering Dean Leo Kempel said that endowed scholarships help the college attract bright, talented students, regardless of their ability to pay.

“It was an endowed scholarship that originally helped launch this donor’s successful career,” Kempel said. “That makes this commitment particularly inspiring to those who dream of becoming engineers.”

The alumnus grew up on a farm in Michigan. His excellent grades in math and science caught the attention of his high school math teacher, who encouraged him to advance his education at Michigan State.

So the young man took his savings, found part-time jobs at college, and worked for General Motors during the
summers. By his junior year, however, he was running out of money. He had a tuition bill he couldn’t pay and needed to find a way to complete his education.

An endowed scholarship saved his dream to graduate as an engineer. The scholarship paid his tuition – which made all the difference in him completing his degree.

He moved to California and became a successful entrepreneur, where he still owns and operates a business today.

“I want kids from disadvantaged situations to get an education and improve themselves the way I was able to,” he said. “I want them to get that piece of paper that says you have a degree, and then take it as far as it will go.

“The world needs a lot of help these days,” he added. “Maybe I can provide a little of it.”

Endowed gifts to the College of Engineering

Stephen Bates, senior director of development and alumni relations, said endowment gifts allow the college to provide continual funding to a specific program or project. The gift’s principal is invested and a portion of the annual earnings is used for annual program support.

“I know this donor believes, as many of us do, that access to higher education is the best hope for overcoming the world’s problems and endowed scholarships are a wonderful way to implement his vision,” Bates said.

This planned gift supports Empower Extraordinary, the $1.5 billion campaign for MSU that launched publicly in October 2014. To date, the College of Engineering has raised more than $74 million of its $80 million campaign goal.