Dorgan named to inaugural Lamp Endowed Chair in Chemical Engineering

An expert in polymeric materials and composites from the Colorado School of Mines has been appointed as the inaugural David L. and Denise M. Lamp Endowed Chair in Chemical Engineering at Michigan State University.

John R. Dorgan is the first recipient of the endowed faculty position that was created in 2014 by the Lamp family of Dallas, Texas.

Dorgan began his academic career at the Colorado School of Mines (CSM) in 1993 and received the National Science Foundation’s prestigious CAREER Award in 1995. He has developed new computer simulation algorithms and theory to explain and understand the phenomena of molecular weight based migration in flowing polymers.

“My interest is fairly traditional - to understand flow migration in manufacturing polyethylene pipe and film,” he explained.

Dorgan led the technical effort in developing composite materials for wind turbines as part of the federal Institute for Advanced Composite Manufacturing Innovation (IACMI). Here in Michigan, MSU is a key partner in IACMI with an emphasis on vehicle lightweighting to improve performance and reduce costs.

“In my project, we are trying to drive down costs by reducing the time it takes to mold a turbine blade, at the same time we are developing new resin systems that make the wind turbines easier to recycle.”

He has received more than $10 million dollars in research funding from the National Science Foundation, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Energy, and U.S. Department of Agriculture.
Dorgan is a past president of the Bioenvironmental Polymer Society. He led a successful effort to organize C2B2, an industry sponsored research center involving faculty and staff members from the Colorado School of Mines, the University of Colorado at Boulder, Colorado State University, and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.

“One of my on-going projects is the optimization of biodegradable polymer fibers for use in hydraulic fracturing operations,” he added.

Dorgan received a bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering summa cum laude from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (1986) and his PhD in chemical engineering from the University of California at Berkeley (1991). While studying at Berkeley, he was awarded a Hertz Fellowship based, in part, on a technical interview with Professor Edward Teller. Additionally, Dorgan completed postdoctoral studies at the Max Planck Institute for Polymer Research in Mainz, Germany.

Related Website: Communications contact: Patricia Mroczek

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