MSU co-hosts national IACMI composites workshop focused on scale-up and lightweighting

Michigan State University co-hosted Road 2 Composites, an automotive and transportation workshop focused on scale-up, lightweighting, and high volume composites, May 16-17 in the Composite Vehicle Research Center (CVRC).

It was half trade show and half training seminar, said MSU University Distinguished Professor of Chemical Engineering and Materials Science Lawrence Drzal, and very important to Michigan and the U.S.

“The response from Michigan manufacturing and the entire automotive supply chain has been overwhelming,” Drzal said. “The interest in composites is deep. It offers the potential for manufacturing expansion, job creation in vehicles, and many other areas."

More than 200 U.S. leaders from the automotive and transportation industries gathered at the CVRC on Alliance Drive, southwest of campus, for the two-day workshop.

Subject matter experts from the Institute for Advanced Composites Manufacturing Innovation (IACMI) - The Composites Institute, Composites One, Magnum Venus Products and MSU led sessions at the workshop.

IACMI is a partnership of industry, universities, national laboratories, and federal, state and local governments working together to accelerate development and commercial deployment of advanced composites.
Live demonstrations covered topics including rapid prototyping, composites testing, and thermoplastic fabrics.

Some of the key speakers at Road 2 Composites were:

- Drzal, who along with his MSU roles, is IACMI director of vehicle technology and the 2016 Composite Medal of Honor recipient;
- Bryan G. Dods, IACMI CEO;
- Corbett Leach, Composites One Lead Technical Support Manager; and
- Dan Houston, IACMI/MSU, who is a consultant at MSU's Composite Materials & Structures Center.

Dale Brosius, chief commercialization officer for IACMI, said Road 2 Composites was a way to represent the range of materials and processes in composites today.

"This was a great event for interfacing, from OEMs to material suppliers - small companies and large companies," he said. "The fact that it's in Michigan is really important. Michigan State was able to show off its capabilities to the state and multiple industries."

MSU PhD student Mariana Desiree Reale-Batista was one of several Spartan Engineering students who presented a poster on her research during the event. A materials science engineering student, her PhD advisor is Drzal.

"The idea is to show the work we're doing at MSU to the companies so they can see the real application of the work," she explained. "It gives us a chance to show that what we're doing can be applied to industry."