Minnesota couple supports electrical and computer engineering at MSU

A Minnesota couple known for helping students cultivate an interest in math and science has committed $750,000 to support graduate students in electrical and computer engineering at Michigan State University.

Paul E. and Ruth E. Bauhahn of Fridley, Minn., are continuing their philanthropic efforts through a charitable bequest of $675,000 for the Bauhahn Fellowship in Electrical and Computer Engineering and another $75,000 for the MSU Electrical Engineering Discretionary Endowed Fund. The bequest recognizes MSU in the family’s estate plan.

Paul Bauhahn said today’s job market requires workers with advanced skills.

“That’s why we want to help with this fellowship in electrical and computer engineering,” he explained. “I feel there’s so much to learn because knowledge has become so complex and that’s why we want to support graduate education.”

Ruth Bauhahn’s interest are at the intersection of electrical and computer engineering, and neuroscience.

“I spent 25 years at Medtronic, where I worked in the development of products with an emphasis on the brain, tremors and Parkinson’s,” she noted. “I think the direction Michigan State is moving propels a solution for neuro-degenerative disease. Good graduate students will be able to advance those efforts.”

MSU Foundation Professor John Papapolymerou, who is chair of the MSU Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECE), said he is grateful to the Bauhahns because it will help the ECE department attract and retain students who can further advance the state-of-the-art of electrical engineering and benefit society.

“The fellowship will provide financial assistance to highly talented students who may have not been able to pursue a
graduate degree otherwise," he said. “Paul and Ruth's generosity speaks volumes of their love and commitment to encourage more students to pursue graduate degrees in a STEM related field.”

Paul Bauhahn is a physicist and electrical engineer. He retired in 2011 from Honeywell, where he developed microwave, millimeter wave and micromechanical devices, and worked with lasers for diverse applications. He holds 13 patents.

He graduated from the University of Chicago with a bachelor’s degree in physics and learned about electronics when he joined the U.S. Air Force. He earned a second bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering at Michigan State University in 1968 while taking graduate courses in physics. He also holds master’s degrees in electrical engineering and physics, and a PhD in physics from the University of Michigan.

Ruth Bauhahn is retired from the medical equipment development company Medtronic, where she served as a human factor scientist in product development. Her five patents are related to the design of medical devices for spinal cord stimulation. She earned two degrees in education, a bachelor’s degree at Wheaton College and a master’s degree at the University of Michigan.

The couple has donated their time and resources to schools in Minnesota, as well as the University of Michigan and MSU.

The gift supports Empower Extraordinary, the $1.5 billion campaign for MSU that launched publicly in October 2014. To date, the College of Engineering has topped its $80 million campaign goal and is now at more than $100 million. The campaign closes on Dec. 31, 2018.

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