A gift from James Schmidt ’71 advances innovation in the Manufacturing Teaching Laboratory

A plaque recognizing the friendship of James A. Schmidt to the Michigan State University College of Engineering was unveiled on Sept. 10 during the dedication of the JASchmidt Manufacturing Teaching Laboratory in the Engineering Building.

Schmidt, along with his partner Karen West, Engineering Dean Leo Kempel, and others gathered in the Engineering Building to reveal the nameplate that honors the 1971 mechanical engineering graduate and his gift of $250,000 making the lab possible.

James Klausner, chair of the Department of Mechanical Engineering, spoke about the role of teaching in today’s manufacturing marketplace.

“Our students go into many diverse disciplines,” Klausner said, “and so we want them to be thinking outside the box. Experiential learning is an important component of engineering education, and facilities like this encourage innovation. Your generous gift is used by our students both day and night. We really appreciate your support.”

The JASchmidt Manufacturing Teaching Laboratory is located on the first floor of the Engineering Building and is open 60 hours a week to assist students with four design classes and multiple team competitions in the college. Student teams, such as Formula, Baja, Rocket, Starx, Solar racing, and bicycle clubs use the variety of manufacturing facilities, including 3D printers, to complete projects for team competitions.

Schmidt said he was pleased to assist in the lab development because “MSU has always been an important part” of his life.

Today, he splits his time between Houston and Michigan's Grand Haven.