MSU and Consumers Energy Partnership Empowers Next Generation of Engineers

September 23, 2011

Consumers Energy and the Consumers Energy Foundation have partnered with Michigan State University's College of Engineering to empower the next generation of engineers to address energy-related issues.

A ribbon cutting on September 22, 2011, marked the opening of the Energy Theme Floor in Wilson Hall. MSU President Lou Anna K. Simon and John G. Russell, president and CEO of CMS Energy and Consumers Energy, spoke at the ceremony. Later in the evening, Russell presented a lecture, "Energy and Engineers," to a group of students, faculty and staff.

"These events mark yet another milestone in the College of Engineering's quest to engage early engineering students around the Grand Challenges of the 21st century, as outlined by the National Academy of Engineering," said Thomas Wolff, College of Engineering associate dean for undergraduate studies and director of the Engineering Residential Experience and Cornerstone Engineering programs.

Last year, Consumers Energy partnered with MSU to become the first corporate sponsor in MSU's new Engineering Theme Partnership program, an initiative of the college's residential and first-year engineering programs.

"It is great to see Consumers Energy take advantage of the opportunity to work with these bright young people," said MSU President Lou Anna K. Simon. "We hope to strengthen these types of partnerships with major corporations - especially those based in Michigan - to add value to our work force development and research capabilities."

As the sponsor of the new Energy Theme Floor, Consumers Energy engages first-year students in problem solving and active learning centered on the energy industry. Student involvement includes developing ideas to address energy industry issues, leading environmental initiatives, working on energy-related projects that emphasize an interest in technology with a low carbon footprint, and field trips to Consumers Energy facilities.

Students in the Engineering Residential Experience live in Wilson Hall with engineering students as well as those from other majors and colleges, promoting cross-disciplinary interactions. Special seminars, advising and academic support are available within the residence hall. Cornerstone Engineering classes are also taught at Wilson, providing first-year engineering students with hands-on problem-solving experience beginning with their first semester on campus. Students learn how to function in a collaborative, team-based, diverse and increasingly global setting.

"At Consumers Energy, we believe our support for this program and the MSU engineering students is a critical component of our long-term business success. Our company needs bright young engineers to meet the energy challenges of the future," Russell said. "One of the things that excites me about this growing relationship between Michigan State University and Consumers Energy is the opportunity for students and faculty to learn more about the energy industry and our company, which has been serving millions of customers in this state for 125 years."

"Partnerships like this enable us to connect our students' passions and at the same time immerse them in working on the problems of the future - areas that will need engineers' attention over the next 40 years," said Satish Udpa, dean of MSU's College of Engineering.

Including this sponsorship, Consumers Energy and the Consumers Energy Foundation have provided more than $3 million in support for Michigan State.