

## **WMU, area firms formally launch simulation research consortium**

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KALAMAZOO--Four area engineering groups have joined with Western Michigan University's College of Engineering and Applied Sciences to form a consortium aimed at using computer simulation to enhance product development in the motor vehicle industry.

Representatives from Dana Corporation, Eaton Corporation, L-3 Communications and MANN+HUMMEL USA Inc. met on campus Oct. 31 to sign agreements that will formally launch the CAViDS Consortium as a member with WMU's Center for Advanced Vehicle Design and Simulation. The four founding industrial partners join two government laboratory members in the initiative that aims to provide breakthrough computer simulation technology and knowledge to the motor vehicle industry, particularly in the areas of vehicle design and analysis. The government units are the U.S. Army Tank-Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center in Warren, Mich., which is known as TARDEC, and the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Oak Ridge, Tenn.

"This is a unique opportunity for us to work cohesively with automotive companies in the area to focus the University's applied research resources in a way that will match our industrial consortium members' future needs," says CAViDS director, Dr. William Liou, professor of mechanical and aeronautical engineering. "We want to leverage the University's intellectual resources in a way that will make all of the consortium members more successful."

According to Liou, the investments in CAViDS by all of its members will be used to develop basic simulation tools and to customize technology already developed to meet industry needs. The

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University and federal labs will supply new knowledge to industry. The companies involved will share part of the cost of applied technology development, but they'll also share the benefit of using new engineering tools and hiring young engineers trained by CAViDS.

The core research projects will be funded by the membership fees of industrial full members. Intellectual property growing out of the research will be owned or co-owned by the employers of the individuals who make contributions to inventions, and patent filing will be negotiated among the owners of the inventions.

Industrial partners have a lengthy list of membership benefits including opportunities to participate in or sponsor core research projects, test emerging technologies, have access to CAViDS computer technology, enjoy input from faculty experts, have new technology adapted to their specific needs and receive training on new technology, when necessary.

In June, executives from the region's automotive companies gathered at WMU's Parkview Campus for the first CAViDS workshop. An introduction to the center and WMU faculty, the event featured presentations on current research initiatives and cutting-edge technology available through the engineering college. More than 60 people attended, representing companies of all sizes.

Dana Corporation and Eaton Corporation, two frequent University partners in research and other projects, displayed their wares during the event, in the form of three massive truck trailers that sported their latest technologies and innovations.

Earlier in October, CAViDS was awarded \$1 million by the U.S. Department of Defense to use its resources to improve and the design and reliability of military vehicles.

"We'll be looking heavily at dual use technology that can improve military vehicles and be adapted to domestic vehicle production," Liou says. "Such work builds synergy and leverages the investment of all our partners."