



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Paper Technology
Foundation

Paper Trail

2023 FALL NEWSLETTER

FOUNDATION *News*

Greetings from Kalamazoo. The fall of 2023 has been an exciting period as the foundation continues to grow and achieve significant progress on our strategic objectives. Let me expand on these:

MEMBERSHIP

PTF currently consists of 35 corporate members and two additional contributing companies for a total of 37 financial supporters. Both WestRock and Graphic Packaging International granted generous gifts of \$25,000 for their Fiscal Year 2024 membership dues. Thank you! Perhaps others can follow suit as a means of adding to our scholarship funding. Unfortunately, Loparex and Mativ withdrew their memberships due to business reasons. Six additional corporations are contemplating becoming members in 2024.

For Fiscal Year 2023, our revenue income from membership, investment activity and other gifts reached \$605,750 which included a \$221k gift-in-kind from BTG (lab instruments). Excluding the in-kind gift, revenue income was up 10%. Our 2024 Fiscal Year forecast for revenue income is \$446k, up an additional 16%. Most of this increase is due to growth in membership dues and new sources of fundraising.

We are also experiencing significantly greater participation from our members with practicums, student mentoring, classroom instruction, and PTF Board/committee meetings. We welcomed 31 trustees for our 65th Annual Meeting on Oct. 17, our largest turnout in years.

A highlight of the annual meeting was a mentoring panel question and answer session about various career preparation and success topics. On the panel was Ray Shirley, SVP of Corporate Engineering and Process Improvement for PCA; Shannon Kangas, Area VP of Sales for Nalco Water/ Ecolab; and Palace Stepps, VP and GM for Sonoco. We are very grateful for our panelists and intend to do this again.

RECRUITMENT

We welcomed 40 new students into Paper Engineering this fall, a level not achieved in decades. Appreciation and congratulations go to Cindy Gleaton and those who support her in reaching our strategic goal one year in advance. Details of this achievement were presented to the Board Trustees at the annual meeting by Cindy and are summarized later in this newsletter.

Additionally, student academic achievement continues to be high and retention has improved significantly and now stands at 90%. Our total enrollment stands at 107.

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FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

During our Annual Meeting, Dr. Kecheng Li shared his vision for the department faculty and changes in the sequence of coursework for Paper Engineering with the Board Trustees. To support this vision, the Department of Chemical and Paper Engineering has been granted a position, which enables Dr. Li to proceed with the Raymond L. James Endowed Professorship subject to the identification of the proper candidate. This objective has been in the works for nearly a decade and we are thrilled to be able to fulfill the desires of the many financial donors for this shared PTF/Department of Chemical and Paper Engineering aspiration. Note to all trustees: please provide the names of any candidates you may believe fit the position profile.

Several Paper Engineering courses are now supported or completely instructed by nearly 25 subject matter experts, most of whom represent our member companies and Board Trustees. These include: Paper 1000 Introduction to Paper Engineering, Paper 2420 Coating, Paper 4300 Wet-end Chemistry and Paper 5501 Advanced Paper Processes. This represents another area of corporate engagement and support, and I want to thank the many guest instructors for their commitment to our student's education.

SCHOLARSHIP FUNDRAISING

This continues to be of overwhelming concern for the Foundation as our current scholarship endowments fall well short of the funding necessary to support our recruiting and enrollment objectives. To manage our appropriations, we have been forced to reduce our scholarship awards by \$5k to \$15k and to limit the incoming enrollment awards to 40.

The Board has also agreed to appropriate any surplus over \$100k from our general fund each year to help make up the gap. These measures alone will not meet our needs; we must find ways to increase our current scholarship endowments of just over \$4 million through increases in dues, annual alumni and trustee giving, recruiting event fees, and corporate named endowments. As I have repeatedly communicated, there have been no additional corporate-named endowments in decades, yet corporations are the beneficiaries of our students upon graduation!

Corporate Trustees — please urgently consider what you can personally give (along with a company match, if available) and seek ways in which your corporation can establish a named endowment. These require \$30k that can be funded over five years. A \$25k membership gift could fund \$13k each year toward a named endowment.

Alumni — you too can establish legacy named endowments of \$30k that can be funded over five years. Please give this your utmost philanthropic priority. There are several tax-advantaged ways to fund your gifts. To this end, in cooperation with WMU gift planning, we have authored a brochure that outlines many of these strategies such as IRA and 401k RMD direct distribution, estate planning, and gift annuities. **Check out the brochure [here](#).** Professional gift planners are also available to consult with your investment/fiduciaries as well.



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In closing, I want to again thank our PTF Officers, Board Trustees and staff (Jen Johnson, Cindy Gleaton, Alyssa McCurren) for accomplishing many of our strategic and operating objectives. Fiscal Year 2024 brings additional opportunities for further investment in developing the very best paper engineering graduates in the country.

Best regards,

BRIAN L. PAHL , PTF MANAGING DIRECTOR

SENIOR *Recognition*

Congratulations to our Fall 2023 graduating class for their achievements!



SOPHIA LOUDEN

Hometown | East Lansing, MI

Favorite experience at WMU | Giving tours of the paper pilot plant and engineering building; showing off the facilities at Western!

Work experience | Co-Op with Ahlstrom in Mosinee, WI; Internship with Kimberly-Clark in Neenah, WI; Internship with Kimberly-Clark in Beech Island, SC; and Internship with Georgia-Pacific in Neenah, WI

Awards and Achievements | Medallion Scholar and Lee Honors College

After graduation | Papermaking Platform Process Engineer for Georgia-Pacific in Neenah, WI



ETHAN KLAISS

Hometown | Grand Rapids, MI

Favorite experience at WMU | Living and working in the UP during the summer; exploring different areas and golf courses

Work experience | Internship at WestRock, Battle Creek; three Internships at Verso/Billerud, Escanaba; remote work during school

Awards and Achievements | Bronco Merit Scholar

After graduation | Process Engineer for Billerud in Escanaba, MI



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PAPER NIGHT *Success*



On Sept. 19, 2023, 25 PTF member partners participated in the 7th Annual Paper Industry Night exclusive hiring event, exceeding last year's record of 18 PTF company participants. This event is only for PTF member companies and provides first access to the 100+ paper engineering students at Western Michigan University. This year's Paper Night was a successful scholarship fundraiser — raising \$34,000!



Thank you to our PTF corporate partners for supporting the WMU Paper Engineering program with meaningful industry placement opportunities! Results from the fall hiring events will be published in the May 2024 Paper Trail newsletter.

FALL FIELD TRIP AND *Alumni dinner*

On the weekend of Sept. 15 and 16, 45 paper engineering students experienced a tour around Lake Michigan while making several important stops along the way.

First stop: ND Paper in Biron, WI

This is where students had their first exposure to a paper mill, and was an excellent opportunity to learn about recycling operations. They also met their classmate Jackson, who is doing a process engineering co-op at the mill.





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Second stop: 6th Annual Alumni Dinner in Menasha, WI

Students and alumni were able to connect for the evening while alumni shared advice and valuable insight into their paper industry careers. A special shout out to Matt Shadley '08 with Ahlstrom who won the prize for the farthest drive to attend the dinner. Thank you to everyone who came out to support the students! We appreciate your engagement and support!

Last stop: Billerud in Escanaba, MI

Students were able to get an up-close look at the paper-making process from start to finish at this fully integrated facility. This detailed exposure included a bus ride to visit all the operations including the wood yard, and wastewater treatment.



STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS:

“I learned that no matter where I work after graduation, I will always be a part of the paper family.”

— Anastasiia Hrukach
(WMU Paper Freshman)

“The fall field trip opened my eyes to what the industry is all about. It was helpful to see their ideas for improvements, innovation & sustainability, which is why I went into engineering in the first place.”

— Toby Archer
(WMU Paper Freshman)



Thank you to ND Paper, Billerud and alumni for making a difference in the future of WMU Paper Engineering students!

SAVE THE DATE: BRONCO PAPER FAMILY REUNION!

Tuesday, April 16

Join us as we come together and celebrate being part of the Paper Family! Alumni, PTF Trustees, industry partners, students and families, faculty, and staff are all welcome. We look forward to this first-time event. More details will be announced on the PTF LinkedIn page next spring.



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SCHOLARSHIP FUNDRAISING GOAL

Help close the Gap! Follow the QR code to provide scholarships for future paper engineering students.



Endowment and General Fund: \$300,000

Planned: \$60,000

Gap: \$40,000

ALUMNI *Excellence*



Alumni Excellence Award:

Mark Zempel, B.S.E.'92
Axchem USA, Vice President and General Manager

Mark Zempel, B.S.E.'92, is vice president and general manager for Axchem USA, the U.S. business of Axchem Group, a global leader in specialty chemical programs and solutions for the pulp and paper industry. Before taking on this role in 2019, Zempel held sales, marketing, supply chain, and business management roles at Ecolab Nalco Water, Georgia-Pacific Chemicals, AkzoNobel Eka Chemicals, and BetzDearborn Hercules. He started his career as a process engineer and supervisor at Miami Paper. The true beginning of his industry experience, however, was working as a student in the WMU Paper Pilot Plant with Jack McCoy and Andy Lapekas. He learned more invaluable lessons while interning at Crown Vantage. Zempel also holds an MBA from Kennesaw State University (Georgia).

Zempel is active as a board member of the WMU Paper Technology Foundation, where he enjoys contributing to the continued success of the program and foundation that led to his fulfilling career in the pulp and paper industry.



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Emerging Alumni Award

Alex Fleck, B.S.E.'18, M.S.'23
Graphic Packaging, K2 Assistant Superintendent

Alex is currently working in a position that traditionally is achieved after several decades of working in the industry. He has an exceptional blend of technical knowledge and people skills, and is a resource for interns and students at WMU.



Emerging Alumni Award

Dr. Kendra Fein, B.S.E.'15
Ahlstrom Corp., Product Development Engineer

As a product development engineer at Ahlstrom, Kendra is developing new products with broad scale commercial applications. Her doctoral research was in nano cellulose technology, including working on initial successful commercial application at a paper mill.



Emerging Alumni Award

Lance McCauley, B.S.E.'17
New-Indy Containerboard, Paper Machine Superintendent

Lance is an individual of strong moral character, and his work ethic has resulted in rapid advancement for a young process engineer.



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RECRUITMENT AND Enrollment

For the second year in a row, our student enrollment has increased! We welcomed 40 new students this fall — 50% of which are female. Fall 2023 semester enrollment now stands at 107 undergrad paper engineering students. Our highest level in decades!



Our recruitment strategies continue to be successful. Potential students visit campus to experience hands-on paper-making in our labs while meeting with current students — seeing what life would be like as a WMU Paper Bronco! Our Mill Town strategy (presenting in high schools close to paper mill operations) continues to yield students. Thank you to Packaging Corporation of America, USG, and Graphic Packaging International for collaborating with us on these visits!

Upcoming events include high school field trips to WMU and College of Engineering and Applied Sciences open houses where Paper Engineering will be featured with a paper station and tours of the Pilot Plant. Our aim is always to make connections that grow the paper family. By academic year 2024–25, our goal is to have 120 students enrolled in WMU’s paper engineering program. We are well on our way to meet or exceed this target.

Follow us on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok to stay up to date on all of our events. Please contact me with funny stories, exciting events, questions, or suggestions at cynthia.gleaton@wmich.edu.

CINDY GLEATON, PAPER ENGINEERING RECRUITER





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TS'AI LUN *Update*

The 2023-24 Ts'ai Lun eBoard has been hard at work this fall. We are determined to help each student find success in their academic and professional development. It's truly amazing to watch our paper family grow and succeed in their careers!



Fall 2023 Highlights:

- We had a great turnout to our Freshman Welcome Event at the beginning of September. This was an important time for our 40 new students to connect with their upperclassmen mentors, get to know one another, play kickball, and pick up their swag bags—full of gifts from our Corporate Partners!
- Thomas David, class of 2000, and some of his colleagues from WestRock held a resume review session before our Engineering Expo to help our students be prepared when talking and interviewing with industry professionals.
- Ts'ai Lun held our 1st Annual Golf Outing Friday, September 22 as a fundraiser to send us to TAPPI Student Summit. It was a beautiful day with 60 participants including current WMU students, industry professionals and WMU alumni. We were able to fundraise over \$5,000! A big thank you to our sponsors Solenis, Albany International and Graphic Packaging International. This event would not have been a success without you!

We look forward to hosting more valuable events next semester for our paper family to continue to build a strong community.

Emma Norwood, Ts'ai Lun Publicity Director