



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Paper Technology  
Foundation

# Paper Trail

2023 SUMMER NEWSLETTER



## FOUNDATION *News*

### APRIL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

On April 17, we welcomed record attendance at our Spring meeting. The day began at Floyd Hall for the annual Senior Design Project presentations. Our project sponsors this year were New Indy Containerboard, Solenis/ StenCo LLC, Primient, and IMERYS and there was general consensus that the presentations were exceptional and that the sponsorship of “paper-related” projects greatly benefited our Paper Engineering students. For the 2024 Spring semester, we will again be seeking 4-5 corporate sponsors. All inquiries can be addressed to Dr. James Springstead at [james.springstead@wmich.edu](mailto:james.springstead@wmich.edu).

After a tour of the department labs and pilot facilities, we reconvened for our Board of Trustees meeting to vote on new members, changes to our Bylaws, and our Fiscal Year 2024 operating budget. Steve Myers, PTF President, proposed changes to our committees that will provide leadership succession and enhanced committee effectiveness and communication. In addition, a new alumni engagement committee will be formed with the objective of improving overall communication and giving.





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The meeting also included a presentation from Dr. Priyanka Sharma, our newest faculty member, regarding her research with nanocellulose. Additionally, Jennifer Yelovina – Senior Director of Gift Planning for WMU presented various tax efficient strategies for giving. This will be used to publish a gift planning guide for prospective PTF donors. Nick Griffith reviewed the investment performance of the WMU Foundation which includes our PTF endowment funds. Our investment performance has been superior to the overall equity and fixed income markets, as a result of having exposure to more illiquid investments such as private equity, direct lending and real estate.



Finally, our students, Trustees, staff and prospective students/parents participated in a mentoring roundtable session. This continues to be a highlight of our PTF meetings.

In closing, I want to thank everyone for their engagement and thought leadership. Also, a big thanks to Jen Johnson and Alyssa McCurren for their exceptional planning and organization of another successful meeting.

## JAN VANDER KLEY RECEIVES THE PTF FELLOW AWARD

With overwhelming gratitude, Jan Vander Kley has been recognized as a Paper Technology Fellow for her many years of service to PTF. Jan received her BS degree from WMU in 1980 and her MBA soon thereafter. She is the Vice President for Business and Finance for Western Michigan University and our Foundation Treasurer. Her unwavering support and guidance to our Governance Committee continue to be invaluable. Thank you Jan, and congratulations!







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### MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

We are now receiving financial support from 37 companies, of which 35 represent voting members of the Board of Trustees. Since 2020, PTF membership has grown 40% which best reflects the level of interest in our students and the Paper Engineering program at WMU.

Please join me in welcoming our newest PTF members:

- Sappi North America — Sappi is a global renewable resource company that produces high-quality packaging, specialty and graphic papers, pulp, and biomaterials. The company operates 18 manufacturing sites across three continents — South Africa, Europe, and the US. Kraig Melin, Mill Manager for the Cloquet, MN operation has joined the Board of Trustees.
- Clearwater Paper Corporation and Kemira will be joining us as members. We look forward to welcoming them into the Paper Technology Foundation!

### STUDENT RECRUITING AND ENROLLMENT

We continue to make steady progress toward our enrollment goal of 120 students by academic year 2025-26. In addition, student retention has improved. Of the 30 Freshman from this past academic year, 90% have indicated their intentions to return this fall. This is our highest retention of first-year students in several years.

I want to thank Cindy Gleaton — Recruiting and Outreach Specialist, Jen Johnson — PTF Board Liaison, and Alyssa McCurren — PTF Admin. Assistant, for their efforts to continuously refine our marketing materials and overall recruiting strategy.

I also want to thank Packaging Corporation of America, Green Bay Packaging, Kimberly Clark, and PaperWorks for partnering with us at high schools in close proximity to their mill operations. These efforts will be expanded in the fall in the Upper Peninsula and in the greater southwest Michigan area.





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### SCHOLARSHIPS

PTF scholarships continue to be an important tool in recruiting and retaining students to pursue careers in pulp and paper. During the 2022/23 academic year, nearly \$375,000 was invested in student scholarships.

Nevertheless, our current scholarship endowments are insufficient to achieve our near-term enrollment objective of 120 students. In order to close this gap, we continue to ask our corporate members, Trustees, and alumni to make the Paper Technology Foundation a philanthropic priority.

Giving is easy, just go to [wmich.edu/papertechfoundation](http://wmich.edu/papertechfoundation) and select the DONATE button.

### DR. KECHENG LI AWARDED THE PAPER TECHNOLOGY FOUNDATION ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIP

Dr. Kecheng Li, Chair of the Department of Chemical and Paper Engineering, has been awarded the inaugural Paper Technology Foundation Endowed Professorship. This recognizes Dr. Li's many contributions to the pulp and paper industry and the Paper Engineering program at WMU. This professorship will support additional research and associated publishing.

Dr. Li joined WMU in 2016 as a professor and the Chair of the Department of Chemical and Paper Engineering. Prior to joining WMU, Dr. Li was a professor and University research scholar in the Department of Chemical Engineering at the University of New Brunswick, Canada.

Dr. Li obtained a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering from the University of Toronto. His areas of research include pulp and paper, biorefining for biofuels, nanocellulose, biochemicals; enzyme technologies for wood and fiber processing and wastewater treatment; and state-of-the-art surface and nanoscale techniques. He has also developed more than ten proprietary technologies and holds six US patents. Dr. Li is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry (UK) and a Fellow of the Technical Association of the Pulp and Paper Industry (TAPPI).



Please join me in congratulating Dr. Li for this well-deserved recognition.

A second professorship honoring the late Dr. Raymond L. Janes is fully funded and will be fulfilled in the near future. Major donors for this professorship include Graphic Packaging International, New Indy Containerboard, ProServices, Paper Works, Sonoco, and numerous alumni.



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### GRADUATE PLACEMENTS

Congratulations to our Spring 2023 graduating class for completing their studies and securing new professional positions as follows:

**ROWAN EDMONDS** received the Outstanding Senior Award in recognition for her leadership within Ts'ai Lun and many contributions to the program and fellow students. Well done, Rowan! Rowan will be joining Kimberly Clark — Beech Island, South Carolina as a Process Engineer.

**HANNAH KALLEWARD** will join Graphic Packaging — Kalamazoo, Michigan within their Leadership Development Program.

**KOURTNEY KERANEN** will join NSK — Ann Arbor, Michigan as an Application Engineer.

**ISABEL LOPEZ** will join Gentex Corporation — Zeeland, Michigan as a Production Support Engineer

**LINDSEY LOVATO** will join Packaging Corporation of America — Filer City, Michigan as a Process Engineer

**ISABELLE OWNBY** will join Axchem, USA — Port Townsend, Washington as an Applications Engineer

**LIAM POWELL** will join USG — Otsego, Michigan as a Project Engineer

**OLIVIA PRICE** will join Capstone Technology (dataPARC) — Washougal, Washington as an Implementation Engineer

**HUNTER SHULFER** will join Billerud — Escanaba, Michigan as a Production Engineer

**ANDREW SIEGFRIED** will join Graphic Packaging International — Kalamazoo, Michigan within their Leadership Development Program

**AUSTRALIA WEATHERALL** will join Irving Tissue — Macon, Georgia as a Process Engineer

**SHERI WOOD** will join JRS — Schoolcraft, Michigan as a Project Engineer

On behalf of the Paper Technology Foundation, alumni and faculty, we wish all of you much success in your professional careers .

In closing, I want to thank all of our constituents for their support and efforts to advance PTF and the Paper Engineering program at WMU. We are making steady progress toward achieving our near-terms goals in corporate membership, student enrollment and academic development.

Sincerely,

**BRIAN PAHL '80, MANAGING DIRECTOR**







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## TAPPI Con

WMU was well represented at TAPPICon 2023 in Atlanta, Georgia! The PTF Staff, Chemical and Paper Engineering Department, WMU Pilot Plants, and 9 paper engineering students participated in the full conference offerings. Alex Boyd and Izzy Ownby were personally invited to the conference with all of their expenses paid by TAPPI in order to receive their scholarship from the Recycled Paperboard Technical Association. Additionally, Izzy Ownby was honored with the TAPPI PIMA Student Leadership Award! Additionally, Dr. Li received the TAPPI Fellow award, and Brennan Augst and Garrett Fisher were awarded the Young Professional Awards.

Multiple members of WMU paper and chemical engineering spoke at panel sessions and classes. Dr. Salam spoke at a session on bio-based paper additives for high strength and antimicrobial properties, and Lon Pschigoda led a panel on molded pulp.



“This was my second time attending TAPPICon and I loved it. Networking opportunities are so important for students. My favorite part was seeing people I met last year at TAPPICon. I hope I can go again next year!”— Emma Norwood

“This was my second time going to TAPPICon, and yet again, I had a wonderful time! One of my favorite things about attending TAPPICon was seeing familiar faces of the industry professionals that I had met at last year’s TAPPICon and catching up with them. It’s nice having that connection and support from all these wonderful, passionate people. I also got to meet a lot of new individuals who I’ll hopefully get to meet again in the future. I even gained an amazing industry professional mentor through this conference, someone that I had met at last year’s TAPPICon and really connected with, and I’m excited to take this opportunity to grow even further with her guidance and advice.”— Meegan Heerlyn

“The best part of TAPPICon for me was the people. I thought that after I graduated from Western, I’d be a part of a paper community — TAPPICon showed me that it is much more than just a community, it is a family. I made many connections at the conference and met some awesome people. Once again, it was great to see how supportive everyone is of the younger engineers and college students. I left TAPPICon with a lot of joy and excitement for my career.” — Rowan Edmonds





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## COMPENSATION *Averages*

### WMU PAPER ENGINEERING WAGE AVERAGES FOR INTERN AND CO-OP POSITIONS:

#### Wages 2023

Freshmen.....	\$22.57
Sophomores.....	\$23.15
Juniors.....	\$24.73
Seniors.....	\$25.25
Sign on Bonus Average.....	\$623.13

#### Housing Support

Weekly Avg (13%).....	\$185 (Low \$125–High \$200)
Monthly Avg (40%).....	\$831 (Low \$400–High \$1,200)
One Time Avg (18%).....	\$3,743 (Low \$1,000–High \$8,000)
% Fully Covered (22%)	

Note: 100% of students received housing support if non-local.

### WMU PAPER ENGINEERING GRADUATE CAREER COMPENSATION:

#### Career 2023

Salary Average.....	\$78,077
Sign On Average.....	\$6,350 (High offer of \$12,000)
Relocation Average.....	\$6,000
Bonus Average.....	\$4,425
Unique.....	Special equity grant, 5 weeks of vacation, all-expense paid house hunting trip & moving expenses, \$20K loan repayment



## STUDENT PLACEMENT: SAVE THE DATE:

- Tuesday, Sept. 19 Paper Industry Night | PTF members-only: PTF offers premier access to the paper engineering talent before Expo. Registration will be available in August.
- Wednesday, Sept. 20 Engineering Expo



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## TAPPI TS'AI LUN *RSO*

Throughout the school year, Ts'ai Lun works hard to provide paper engineering students with opportunities to connect with their peers, mentors, and industry professionals. This semester, Ts'ai Lun was able to organize and provide funding for nine paper engineering students to attend TAPPICon in Atlanta, Georgia. Additionally, they organized a blood drive, held an internship advising session with an industry professional from WestRock to prepare students for their first work experience, hosted a Galentine's Day: Women in Engineering event, and an upper/lower class mentoring mixer. Ts'ai Lun also hosted employer nights with New Indy Containerboard and SKF. Thank you very much to our 2022-23 board: Izzy Ownby, Rowan Edmonds, Elisha Ewing, Logan Sturcz, Sydney Moranko, Meegan Heerlyn, and Olivia Price!



A new eBoard was elected in April for the 2023-24 school year: Ally Block (President), Alex Boyd (Vice President), Sam Areaux (Secretary), Andrew Tellez (Treasurer), Abby Bartsh (Special Events Coordinator), Emma Norwood (Publicity Director) and Elisha Ewing (Fundraising Chair).

“As members of the 2023-24 Ts'ai Lun Board, we are very excited to continue the great things from previous years and contribute new ideas to the program throughout our year in leadership. Our overarching goals for the upcoming year are to strengthen the program's connection between different class levels and to fundraise for student summit. We want to have study groups, intramural sports teams, and a successful fall freshman welcome event. A few fundraising ideas include t-shirts, a golf outing, athletic cleanups, and the etiquette dinner. Ultimately, we are very excited to be a part of the leadership team for this upcoming year.” — Ally Block, Ts'ai Lun President 2023-24

## STUDENT *Recruitment*

To date, we have 34 students registered for Paper Engineering this fall.

Our recruiting at high schools in close proximity to paper mill operations (Mill Town Strategy) continues to deliver results and this fall we will include the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

Also, our presence on social media will be enhanced with active Facebook and Instagram pages. We are asking alumni to like us at [wmu\\_paper engineer](#) for both platforms and to provide feature stories, photos, or videos of your professional experiences. Have you recently seen the W magazine? Our paper pilot facilities and paper engineering students have been featured twice in the last year!

This summer we will be hosting visits from the local Girl Scouts, the Kalamazoo Public School Academically Talented Youth Program, and orientation tours and camps involving the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences.

As always, we appreciate your support, feedback, and suggestions. Please reach out with any questions or opportunities. We look forward to another year of successful paper engineering recruitment!

Cindy Gleaton, Paper Engineering Recruiter