PURDUE UNIVERSITY University News Service

Purdue Chemical Engineering celebrates 100 years

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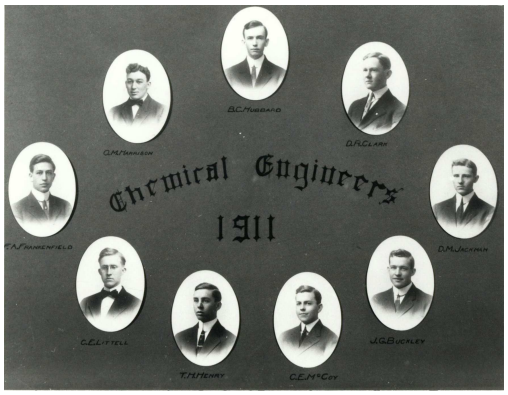

A photo shows Purdue University's chemical engineering class of 1911. Purdue's School of Chemical Engineering is celebrating its 100th anniversary on Oct. 7 and 8 with a series of talks and presentations by alumni, researchers, industry experts and entrepreneurs, as well as a poster presentation by undergraduate and graduate students. (Purdue School of Chemical Engineering photo)

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WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. - Purdue University's **School of Chemical Engineering** is celebrating its 100th anniversary on Oct. 7 and 8 with a series of talks and presentations by alumni, researchers, industry experts and entrepreneurs and posters presented by undergraduate and graduate students.

The celebration traces a history that went from a fledgling curriculum in the Department of Chemistry to a school with 30 faculty members, 500 undergraduate students and 126 graduate students this fall.

Purdue chemical engineering has become a force in areas from alternative energy to research into materials, catalysts and polymers, drug delivery, and pharmaceutical manufacturing to batteries and electric vehicles, said Purdue President France A. Córdova.

"We've educated highly talented chemical engineers who have gone on to lead companies and become world-class researchers," Córdova said.

Purdue completed a $19.5 million remodeling and expansion of the Forney Hall of Chemical Engineering in 2004, doubling its size and adding new teaching and laboratory facilities. The improvements include an interactive multimedia learning center, a lab for teaching chemical engineering fundamentals, and an integrated lab complex that will be used in studying advanced chemical engineering topics and polymer engineering. A $10.2 million renovation of the older part of Forney Hall, built in 1940, is near completion.

"Our vision is to continue educating students through innovative classroom and laboratory technologies and by fostering an environment that inspires leading-edge research," said Leah Jamieson, Purdue's John A. Edwardson Dean of Engineering and Ransburg Distinguished Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering. "It is a vision that has been made possible through the generous support of our esteemed alumni, including Robert and Marilyn Glenn Forney, who provided $10 million of critical funding."

The Forneys, of Unionville, Pa., graduated in 1947, each with a bachelor's in chemical engineering. Robert Forney earned a master's and doctorate from Purdue in 1948 and 1950, respectively, a Distinguished Engineering Alumni Award in 1974, an Outstanding Chemical Engineer award in 1993 and an honorary doctorate in 1981. He retired in 1989 as executive vice president of E.I. DuPont de Nemours and Co. Marilyn Forney has spent more than 20 years offering expertise in the construction of more than 850 housing units for the low-income elderly and disabled in Delaware and Pennsylvania. She also has led fundraising efforts in a number of volunteer organizations.

Purdue's school was founded in 1911, when the university hired its first chemical engineering faculty member and head, Harry C. Peffer. The area has grown steadily since then.

About half of Purdue's chemical engineering class of 2011 poses for a picture. The school is celebrating its 100th anniversary this month. (Purdue School of Chemical Engineering photo)

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"We have added 14 new faculty members since 2003 at both the younger and senior levels," said **Arvind Varma**, the R. Games Slayter Distinguished Professor and head of the School of Chemical Engineering. "We have six professors who are members of the prestigious National Academy of Engineering, among the highest of any chemical engineering program in the United States. Our faculty members are leading field-defining research in key areas, such as catalysis, nanostructured materials, pharmaceutical engineering and clean-energy sources. Our mix of young faculty and seasoned researchers fosters unparalleled collaboration, creativity and innovation."

The White House last week announced that Rakesh Agrawal, a distinguished professor of chemical engineering, will receive a National Medal of Technology and Innovation from President Barack Obama. The award is the highest honor for technological achievement bestowed by the president.

This year, out of some 155 programs in the country, Purdue's graduate program was ranked 15th and the undergraduate program 12th by U.S.News & World Report.

Varma will deliver a welcoming address 1 p.m. Friday (Oct. 7) in Forney Hall, Room G140. The industry Centennial Lecture will be presented at 1:15 p.m. by retired chairman and CEO at Dow Chemical Co., Paul Oreffice, a Purdue alumnus who earned a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering in 1949 and an honorary doctorate in 1976. Also presenting Centennial Lectures will be Nicholas Peppas, a distinguished faculty member from 1976-2002, and currently the Fletcher Stuckey Pratt Chair in Engineering at the University of Texas at Austin, and alumnus Robert Weist, an entrepreneur who earned a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from Purdue in 1962.

Other speakers and panelists will include alumni who are industry executives, university researchers, entrepreneurs and experts in other areas including the legal and finance sectors. These include Purdue alumnus Timothy McGinley, who earned a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering in 1963 and an honorary doctorate in 2010 and served as chairman of Purdue's Board of Trustees from 1993-2009. A full list of speakers is available at **https://engineering.purdue.edu/ChE/AboutUs/Centennial**

A sculpture will be unveiled in the Henson Atrium at 3:45 p.m. Friday (Oct. 7). At 4 p.m. students will present information about their research and leadership activities in a poster session. A reception and dinner will be held 6:30 p.m. at the Purdue Memorial Union. The speaker is Robert Forney.

Writer: Emil Venere, 765-494-4709, **venere@purdue.edu**

Sources: France A. Córdova, **president@purdue.edu**

Leah H. Jamieson, 765-494-5346, **lhj@purdue.edu**

Arvind Varma, 765-494-4075, **avarma@purdue.edu**

Note to Journalists: A sculpture will be unveiled in the Henson Atrium at 3:45 p.m. Friday (Oct. 7) in the Henson Atrium at the Forney Hall of Chemical Engineering.

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