Clarkson University Selected as 2001 Boeing Outstanding Educator

Innovative program in engineering education recognized with $50,000 award

A team of engineering professors from Clarkson University in Potsdam, N.Y., has been selected to receive the prestigious 2001 Boeing Outstanding Educator Award. As the winner, the team members and university will share a $50,000 award.

The Award recognizes educators who have made exceptional contributions to improving undergraduate engineering education. It is presented for programs that effectively develop graduates with the desired attributes of an engineer, which include technical, leadership, business and communications skills. There is a large demand for engineers nationwide, with the U.S. Labor Department predicting a 20 percent increase through 2008.

"Engineering programs like that at Clarkson University are developing the ideal employees that Boeing and technical companies throughout the country are seeking," said Dave Swain, Boeing senior vice president of Engineering and Technology and Chief Technology Officer. "The contributions of these educators, which are often adopted by other schools, help turn today's undergraduates into well-grounded and well-rounded engineers."

Competing faculty and faculty teams are evaluated on improvements they have made to the educational process that enhance the abilities of engineering students. Each individual or team provides evidence that their work has a long-term, pervasive impact on engineering education. They also must demonstrate the extent to which educational improvements have become institutionalized at their school.

The Clarkson team was recognized for creating the Student Projects for Engineering Experience and Design, known as SPEED. Members of the team are Provost Tony Collins, SPEED Director Tina Yuille and professors Jim Carroll, Stefan Grimberg, Ron LaFleur, Maria Lopez, Levon Minnetyan, John Moosbrugger, Thomas Ortmeyer, Susan Powers, Eric Thacher, Ken Visser, David Wick, Steve Yurgartis and Amy Zander.

Now in its fourth year, SPEED's objective is to improve engineering education through team-based multidisciplinary projects. Students participate in numerous national engineering competitions ranging from aircraft design to environmental restoration, and from designing concrete canoes to solar-powered vehicles. The team competitions are open to all students, not just engineering majors. Not only must students design and build their projects, but also they must engage in fundraising, marketing, report writing and project presentation. The effort replicates the team-based work environment that most students will experience when they enter the work force.

Approximately 250 students from all majors at the university participate in one of the numerous projects that come under the SPEED umbrella.

"We are extremely proud of our faculty for achieving this recognition from Boeing," said Denny Brown, president of Clarkson University. "This award illustrates Clarkson's commitment to developing technological leaders. As a result of learning experiences such as SPEED, we graduate engineers who can communicate well, work on teams, and solve problems creatively."

Plans for the award include expanding the SPEED program, increasing the diversity of participants, and developing virtual team design experiences with students at other technical institutions.

Nationally, individuals and teams from 12 schools were nominated for the 2001 Boeing Outstanding Educator Award. The field was narrowed to three finalists, with each visited by the judging team from Boeing for an in-depth examination of the work of each nominated team. Besides Clarkson University, the other finalists were teams from the University of Virginia and Harvey Mudd College.

The $50,000 award is split by the university into three segments that reward the team directly, support the SPEED program and recognize the department that has encouraged and nurtured the successful team.

This is the seventh year Boeing has granted the Outstanding Educator Award. The 2000 recipient was a team of educators from South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. Other previous winners are teams from Northern Arizona University, Penn State University, the University of Maryland and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and the late Dr. Robert Quinn of Drexel University.

Clarkson University

Clarkson University, founded in 1896, is an independent technological university, offering majors in the sciences, engineering, liberal arts, physical therapy and business. More than 2,600 undergraduates and 300 graduate students learn in an academically rigorous, collaborative culture that emphasizes hands-on team projects and real-world interdisciplinary challenges. Many faculty members achieve international recognition for their scholarship and research, and teaching is a priority at every level. As a result, Clarkson has earned a reputation for developing innovative leaders in technology-based fields.

The Boeing Company

The Boeing Company, with headquarters in Seattle, is the largest aerospace company in the world and the United States' leading exporter. It is the world's largest manufacturer of commercial jetliners, military aircraft and space satellites, and the largest NASA contractor. The company's capabilities in aerospace also include rotorcraft, electronic and defense systems, missiles, rocket engines, launch vehicles, and advanced information and communication systems. The company has an extensive global reach with customers in 145 countries and manufacturing operations throughout the United States, Canada and Australia. As of March 2001, Boeing and its subsidiaries employ approximately 198,800 people. Total company revenues for 2000 were $51 billion.

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