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SPE® ANNOUNCES 2008-2009 AUTOMOTIVE COMPOSITES CONFERENCE GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP AWARD WINNERS

***Students, Schools in U.S., Germany Selected in this Year's Competition,
Will Pick Up Checks at 2008 Conference, Report Research Results at 2009 Show***

TROY (DETROIT), MICH. – For the second year, two graduate students and their schools have been awarded scholarships in the amount of \$2,000 USD each to support new research in polymer composites with relevance to ground transportation as part of the ***SPE Automotive Composites Conference & Exhibition*** scholarship program.

Uday Sharma of **University of Michigan-Dearborn (Dearborn, Mich.)** will use his scholarship funds for research on ***Analysis of Thermoplastic Woven Composites at High-Strain Rates***. In explaining the scope of his project, Sharma says: “In recent years, composite materials have increasingly replaced conventional materials in aerospace, marine, civil, and automotive industries as a result of their high specific stiffness, strength, superior corrosion resistance, and low coefficient of thermal expansion. It is important to determine the properties of these composites under dynamic loading for further development in the automotive industry. The objective of the research would be the in-depth study of mechanical behavior shown by thermoplastic woven composites under high strain rates. The research will additionally investigate using a state-of-the-art, non-contact strain measurement system (ARAMIS 3D) to determine the effect of fiber angle and woven architecture on the mechanical behavior of thermoplastic woven composites.”

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Tobias Potyra of **Fraunhofer Institute of Chemical Technology (Pfinztal, Germany)** will use his scholarship for work on ***New Direct Processing Technology for the Manufacture of SMC Parts (Direct-SMC)***. Discussing his project, Potyra says: “Class A exterior body panels for the automotive industry are often manufactured from sheet-molding compound (SMC). The conventional process can result in fluctuations in the quality of the semi-finished material and therefore also in component quality. Also, since it is discontinuous, it may take several days (or longer) before results of formulation changes can be determined. However, the new direct-SMC process – a continuous process where raw material is converted directly into a molded part within minutes of compounding – avoids many of the previous restrictions and makes it possible to establish a control loop in order to assure high and consistent SMC quality. As a result, both scrap and rework are reduced, improving component costs. The scientific challenges in this project are to establish an integrated process – from raw material to molded part – for SMC applications for the automotive industry. The industrial challenges are to meet automotive market requirements of fast cycle times for high-volume production and to produce high-quality material that meets performance requirements consistently.”

This is the second year conference organizers have offered scholarships. In 2007, two awards were made in honor of journalist and composites-industry insider, Steve Loud who passed away in 2006. The recipients were Mr. Roston Elwell from Texas A&M University (College Station, Texas) for research on the use of active-core composite sandwich panels; and Mr. Alejandro Londono-Hurtado from University of Wisconsin-Madison (Madison, Wisc.) whose work involves application of computer simulation and numerical modeling to predict variations in fiber orientation and density distribution during molding of fiber-reinforced automotive parts. Both scholarship winners will report their findings at the 2008 ***SPE ACCE***, which will be held September 16-18, 2008 in Troy, Mich. Ironically, both Sharma and Potyra – the 2008-2009 scholarship winners – will also be presenting at this year’s conference on research that preceded the topics that will engage them in the next academic year.

Now in its 8th year, the ***SPE ACCE*** has become the world’s leading forum for automotive composites and draws exhibitors, speakers, and attendees from Europe, the Middle East, and Asia / Pacific as well as North America. Held annually in the suburbs of Detroit, the conference provides an environment dedicated solely to discussion and networking about advances in the automotive composites industry. Its global appeal is evident in the diversity of exhibitors, speakers, and attendees who come to the conference from Europe, the Middle East, and Asia / Pacific as well as North America and who represent transportation OEMs and tier suppliers; composite materials, processing equipment, additives, and reinforcement suppliers; trade associations, consultants, university and government labs; media; and investment bankers. The show is sponsored jointly by the SPE Automotive and Composites Divisions.

The mission of SPE is to promote scientific and engineering knowledge relating to plastics. SPE’s Automotive and Composites Divisions work to advance plastics and plastic-based composites technologies worldwide and to educate industry, academia, and the public about these advances. Both divisions are dedicated to educating, promoting, recognizing, and communicating technical accomplishments for all phases of plastics and plastic-based composite developments, including materials, processing, equipment, tooling, design and testing, and application development.

SPE Announces Winners of Graduate-Level Research Scholarships in Composites
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For more information about the ***SPE Automotive Composites Conference & Exhibition***, visit the Composites' Division website at www.4spe.org/communities/divisions/d39.php, or the Automotive Division's website at www.speautomotive.com/comp.htm, or contact the group at +1.248.244.8993, or write SPE Automotive Division, 1800 Crooks Road, Suite A, Troy, MI 48084, USA. For more information on the Society of Plastics Engineers International or other SPE events, visit the SPE website at www.4spe.org, or call +1.203.775.0471.

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