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DR. UDAY VAIDYA NAMED THE 2015-2016 SPE® COMPOSITES PERSON OF THE YEAR

TROY (DETROIT), MICH. – The board of directors for the **SPE® Composites Division** have named **Dr. Uday Vaidya**, University of Tennessee/Oak Ridge National Laboratory (UT/ORNL) governor's chair in Advanced Composites Manufacturing and professor in the Department of Mechanical, Aerospace & Biomedical Engineering (MABE) at University of Tennessee-Knoxville (UTK) as well as chief technology officer for the Institute for Advanced Composites Manufacturing Innovation (IACMI) as the recipient of the group's 2015-2016 **Composites Person of the Year** award. Vaidya was recognized at a special ceremony during the 2016 **SPE Automotive Composites Conference & Exhibition** (ACCE), September 7-9 in Novi, Mich. in the Detroit suburbs. First given in fiscal year 2004-2005, the *Composites Person of the Year* award publicly acknowledges a contributor who has provided significant aid to the SPE Composites Division, particularly during the prior year, as well as made broader contributions to the composites industry as a whole. Nominations are reviewed by the board and one recipient is selected by the current division chair in consultation with the current division awards chair.

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Previous winners of the award and their employers at the time include:

- 2004-2005: Dan Buckley, American GFM,
- 2005-2006: John Muzzy, Georgia Institute of Technology,
- 2006-2007: Jim Griffing, The Boeing Co.,
- 2007-2008: Fred Deans, Allied Composite Technologies LLC,
- 2008-2009: Peggy Malnati, Malnati & Associates LLC,
- 2009-2010: Dale Grove, US Silica,
- 2010-2011: Dale Brosius, Quickstep Composites LLC,
- 2011-2012: Creig Bowland, PPG Industries,
- 2012-2013: Dr. Michael Connolly, Huntsman Polyurethanes,
- 2013-2014: Jim Griffing, The Boeing Co., and
- 2014-2015: Dan Buckley, American GFM (*Lifetime Achievement*).

Explaining why he selected Vaidya, Dr. Michael Connolly, SPE Composites Division chair and program manager-urethane composites at Huntsman Polyurethanes said, “Uday was chosen for his long-time contributions to the SPE Composites Division, including nine years of leadership on the education committee and eight years organizing the SPE ACCE student poster competition. Last year he created a new program under the education committee that helps universities apply for funding from the Composites Division — with university matching funds — to purchase teaching materials and laboratory equipment. In addition to these contributions, his effort fostering student development by organizing and advising a new SPE student chapter at University of Tennessee-Knoxville benefits all of SPE as well as the plastics and composites industries. And last, but certainly not least, we wanted to recognize his considerable contributions to the composites industry, including numerous patents, publications — including two books — and presentations at SPE and other industry meetings, industry training workshops, and efforts writing SPE education grants for universities. He has a passion for engineering education and has mentored hundreds of young engineers who’ve now made their way into our industry, including over 60 Master’s and doctoral students.”

In addition to his academic responsibilities, in his current role at IACMI, Dr. Uday Kumar Vaidya chairs the technical advisory board, oversees technology roadmapping efforts, and helps shape high-value industry-led projects for the institute. Since joining UTK, he also has led the establishment of the 10,000-ft²/929-m² Fibers and Composites Manufacturing Facility (FCMF) to serve IACMI and the Tennessee Manufacturing Ecosystem.

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Prior to joining UT/ORNL, Vaidya served as department chair for Materials Science & Engineering and as center director for the Composites Center at University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). He also helped establish and then, as director, led the Materials Processing & Applications Development (MPAD) center at UAB, which focused on leading-edge manufacturing and commercialization of engineered plastics, polymers, fibers, composites, and metal castings.

During his career, he has contributed extensively to research and development of engineered polymers, fibers, and composites and has experience with a broad range of composites for defense, transportation, and industrial applications. Additionally, he has served as principal investigator (PI) or co-investigator (Co-I) on more than 100 projects worth over \$22 million USD to date.

Vaidya has 29 years' teaching experience at five academic institutions (UTK, UAB, North Dakota State University, Tuskegee University, and Auburn University) where he has developed and taught a variety of engineering courses to students from freshmen to graduate levels, and has been recognized with a variety of prestigious teaching awards, including Outstanding Faculty Member Award for the College of Engineering at UTK (2016), the Presidential Teaching Award for Excellence at UAB (2005 and 2013) and also UAB's Graduate Dean's Excellence in Mentorship Award (2014). In 2001, he received the Outstanding Teacher of the Year award at North Dakota State University's School of Engineering, and received the Outstanding Faculty Award for Research in 1996 at Tuskegee University.

A prolific writer, Vaidya has been published in over 180 peer-reviewed international journals and over 350 conference proceedings. He has contributed four book chapters, is the author of Composites for Automotive, Truck and Mass Transit, a book published by DesTech Publishers, and he is completing a second book on Composites for High Schools, Community Colleges, Hobbyists and Freshmen Engineering Students. He also contributes extensively to organizations and events such as SPE, CAMX (the Composites & Advanced Materials Expo), SAMPE (Society for the Advancement of Materials & Process Engineering), the ACMA (American Composites Manufacturers Association) and ICCM International (the International Conference on Composite Materials) as a session organizer, panel discussion coordinator, presenter, exhibitor, invited speaker, and think-tank discussion participant. Furthermore, Vaidya has organized several conferences and workshops himself dealing with composites and plastics research and education. His contributions were recognized in the August/September 2012 issue of *CM* (Composites Manufacturing) magazine as a B.E.S.T. (a bright, energetic, skilled trailblazer) from across the composites industry.

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An entrepreneur as well, Vaidya is a principal and co-founder of Innovative Composite Solutions (ICS), an Alabama company that was established in 2009 after winning first place and \$100,000 USD in the Alabama Launchpad Competition that year. ICS has commercial ventures with high-tech, lightweight composite products for the infrastructure/buildings, power transmission, defense, biomedical devices, and commodity markets. Vaidya also has served as consultant for a number of companies producing fiber-reinforced plastic piping, power/energy, and plastic products.

He holds a B.S. degree in Mechanical Engineering from Karnataka University in India where he was first in his graduating class. He earned an M.S. degree in Mechanical Design Engineering at Walchand College of Engineering (also in India) and received a doctorate in Mechanical Engineering at Auburn University in the U.S.

About the SPE ACCE

Held annually in suburban Detroit, the ACCE draws over 1,000 speakers, exhibitors, sponsors, and attendees and provides an environment dedicated solely to discussion and networking about advances in transportation composites. Its global appeal is evident in the diversity of exhibitors, speakers, and attendees who come to the conference from Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia / Pacific as well as North America. Fully one-third of attendees indicate they work for automotive and light truck, agriculture, truck & bus, or aviation OEMs, and another 25% represent tier suppliers. Attendees also work for composite materials, processing equipment, additives, or reinforcement suppliers; trade associations, consultants, university and government labs; media; and investment bankers. The show has been jointly sponsored by the SPE Automotive and Composites Divisions since 2001. The 17th-annual SPE ACCE will be held **September 6-8, 2017** at [The Diamond Banquet & Conference Center at the Suburban Collection Showplace](#), 46100 Grand River Avenue, Novi, MI 48374. For more information about the SPE ACCE, see <http://speautomotive.com/comp.htm>, or <http://specomposites.com>.

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. For more information on the Society of Plastics Engineers or other SPE events, see www.4spe.org.

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