

CONFERENCE REPORT

FOUNDATION PLANTS SEEDS FOR FUTURE ACADEMIC RESEARCH

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THE EIGHTH ANNUAL TAPPI FOUNDATION CONFERENCE on Paper Industry Research Challenges was held Oct. 28-30, 1997, at Auburn University in Auburn, AL. Previous conferences were held at universities in Charlotte, NC; Baton Rouge, LA; Green Bay, WI; Portland, OR; Savannah, GA; Mobile, AL; and Wisconsin Rapids, WI.

The conferences reflect a TAPPI goal to enable the pulp and paper industry to meet the challenges of the 21st century's global economy. Through the conferences and the seed money program that provides crucial early support, the Foundation aims to increase the number of young professors and graduate students interested in pulp and paper research issues. By interesting young professors and graduate students from top-flight research institutions in pulp and paper concerns, the Foundation hopes to dramatically increase funding for research in areas of interest to the industry. Young professors are specifically targeted because the current Federal research support system tends to reward academics for extending work in a given area.

EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES

This year's conference brought over 40 leading academic and industrial researchers together to discuss potential industry research opportunities. Topics covered capital effectiveness, energy, and sensors and control.

These conferences provide an opportunity for leading pulp and paper industry researchers to explain the industry's present technology and perceived needs to the young professors. Conference Chairman Harry Cullinan, together with TAPPI President and Foundation Chairman Dale Dill, welcomed participants and discussed purposes and priorities of their organizations. Robert Lazar, Chairman of the TAPPI Foundation Research Funding Committee, discussed academic seed money funding opportunities through the TAPPI Foundation's Research Funding Program. The seed money grants are intended to be used as leverage for major research funding by other interested parties. Benjamin Thorp, vice president of Technology of Chesapeake Corporation, delivered the keynote address.

Wednesday's morning program included technical presentations by Auburn University Professor Gopal Krishnagopalan who discussed current pulp and papermaking processes and Benjamin Thorp whose

presentation covered sensors and control. The presentations set the stage for an afternoon tour of the Union Camp Corp. Prattville mill. Janet Neighbors, Union Camp Corp., welcomed the participants and outlined the tour. At the banquet Wednesday evening, William Nicholson of Potlatch Corp., discussed energy performance.

Before the Thursday morning breakout sessions, Fredric Christiansen and Jules Homans of Jacobs-Sirrine and Kinsley Sykes of Andersen Consulting reviewed capital effectiveness. The participants then divided into three groups. Jim Frederick of The Institute of Paper Science and Technology (IPST), moderated the session on energy. David Orloff of IPST, led the session on sensors and control. Harry Cullinan led the session on capital effectiveness priority setting. The breakout sessions permitted both an overview of these topics and the opportunity for academic and industrial researchers to discuss mutual interests one on one.

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

Many of our academic guests indicated they generally had little knowledge of the pulp and paper industry before the conference but knew that the industry was under environmental attack. However, the conference succeeded in changing the participants' perceptions that the industry is slow to change and generally relies on old technology. Typically, they learned that the industry is craving for basic science to help, is making an impressive effort to solve complex problems from a more technical approach, and is concerned about the environment. Most academic participants felt that some relationship existed between industry needs and traditional fields of research and expressed a willingness to conduct research in these areas if funding were available.

The Paper Industry Research Challenge Conferences, together with the seed money program have increased pulp and paper research. At the time of the conference, a total of US\$ 1,922,969 had been granted.

The 1998 Research Conference will take place in Seattle, WA, during the week of Oct. 14, 1998. William Fuller and William McKean will serve as the 1998 Research Conference Cochairmen.

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