$9 million in virtual manufacturing software will boost engineering research, student experience

WMU engineering students are starting the winter semester this week armed with nearly $9 million in virtual manufacturing software that will allow them to go from design to actual product assembly without ever leaving the classroom.

Tecnomatics Technologies Inc. of Novi, Mich., an international supplier of manufacturing systems software for many of the world’s leading manufacturers, has awarded 30 work stations of its Enterprise Manufacture Solutions to the Department of Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering. Each is equipped with five of the firm’s leading software solutions. The software is valued at $8.96 million. The arrangement marks the first partnership of this size between the firm and any college or university in the nation. It will mean WMU engineering students will have unparalleled access to manufacturing engineering software currently in use in the automotive, aerospace, electronics, robotics and utilities industries. It also will mean faculty members will have increased research capabilities in key manufacturing areas.

“Our purpose is to create an awareness for Tecnomatics and our solutions in the academic community and provide training in the technology that we believe will play a key role in students’ future roles in industry and research,” says Eli Dahan, director of marketing for Tecnomatics. “We are working with several other universities around the nation to help them integrate this technology into their programs, but our contacts at WMU have been the most enthusiastic and proactive so far and we have approved all of their software requests. We believe WMU will serve as a model for other institutions as they use this technology for education and research.”

“Public/private partnerships such as this enable us to acquire the kind of expensive, cutting-edge technology that sets our programs and their graduates apart from those of other universities,” says President Elson S. Floyd. “In addition, such infusions of technology allow our faculty and student researchers to engage in research that can return dividends to private industry.”

The Tecnomatics Enterprise Manufacture Solutions that have come to WMU as part of the award are VALISYS, DY-NAMO, ROBCAD and ROBCAD Arc, SIMPLE++, and PART. They provide manufacturing simulation with three-dimensional visualization effects for processes that include design of manufacturing plants, work cells and assembly lines; design and verification of product assembly; packaging and maintenance processes; computer-aided engineering of manufacturing processes such as arc-welding; and the definition, prediction and analysis of manufacturing tolerances.

“These software solutions will dramatically increase instructional and research capabilities in the area of virtual manufacturing within the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences,” says Tarun Gupta, industrial and manufacturing engineering, who developed the agreement with Tecnomatics. “There are endless possibilities for the use of computers to train engineers in the kind of decision-making skills needed in manufacturing. These software products open those possibilities to our students.”

Gupta, who is director of the college’s Computer-Integrated Manufacturing Laboratory, says industry also will benefit from the arrangement because the existence of the software on campus will significantly increase capacity for conducting industry-sponsored research and allow the University to offer seminars, training sessions on the state-of-the-art production tools in a virtual environment. Michigan industry also will have, for the first time, access to young engineers who graduate with experience in the use of such technology.

Since word of the new software started to spread in the fall, Gupta notes, students have been inquiring about whether the new products are installed and ready for them to use. Many, he says, are eager to become fluent in use of the software before they graduate. And some employers who have become aware of the development also have begun making inquiries about hiring graduates who have experience with the software.

“We had not even started to use this in our classes when I started receiving calls from people wanting to know how soon they can hire students with experience in this technology,” Gupta says. He notes that two of the products were installed and ready for use by a graduate class in the fall.

Chase and Gambino win teaching excellence awards, will be honored at Feb. convocation

Faculty experts on shoreline erosion and food marketing have been recognized by University alumni for their outstanding teaching and their contributions to the success of their students.

Robert B. Chase, geosciences, and Frank M. Gambino, marketing, are the recipients of 1999 Alumni Teaching Excellence Awards from the WMU Alumni Association. They will be honored Tuesday, Feb. 8, during WMU’s annual Academic Convocation, scheduled for 3 p.m. in the Dalton Center Recital Hall.

Chase, who came to WMU in 1973, and Gambino, a faculty member since 1984, join more than 125 other WMU faculty members who have received the award since it was established in 1966. An association committee selects recipients from nominations by alumni members, former students and colleagues. Each recipient receives a plaque and a $2,000 cash award.

Chase teaches courses in the marine environment, and personal finance, and receives popular and enthusiastic reviews. He is noted for his "charisma, "interest in teaching" and the success of his students as well as his professional expertise.

One former student described Chase's classes as "challenging" and "stimulating." Another described "he makes geology fun and interesting, and because he is so interested in it himself." A third praised his "thorough knowledge of his field and his adept, bubbling interest in what he teaches." Wu also praised Chase for his involvement in students' learning, adding that he exhibits "those ideals that mark an effective teacher." Another colleague noted that his courses "are exceptionally well orchestrated."
A two-month grant total that reached nearly $18 million and was marked by the Office of University Relations, Walwood Hall, Western Michigan University, and is available at several campus locations. Western News is distributed without charge to faculty and students in the college's residence halls and technology park. The grant total for October and November was $17,368,240, pushing the year-to-date to $17,668,240, marking a significant increase from the $15,799,760 reported a year ago.

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Board approves appointment of Minnesota administrator as new human resources chief

An employment and employee relations administrator with more than 13 years of management experience, Dorla Evans, has been named the president for human resources at the University of Minnesota. The appointment of Barbara B. Updike, the current director of human resources at St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wis., and manager of employment and staff development at Northern Michigan University, was approved Dec. 10 by the Board of Trustees. Her appointment is effective Jan. 10.

Updike has been director of human resources at Minnesota State University, Mankato, currently serving as the director of human resources at St. Norbert College University Personnel Association of the Society for Human Resource Management and the Higher Education Resource Center.

Active in professional and community organizations, Updike is a member of the Minnesota State University Mankato Human Resources Council, Midwest Regional board as well as the Minnesota CUPA board. She has served several years as CUPA’s representative to the University of Minnesota University Personnel Committee, including Outstanding Service Awards in the areas of management and affirmative action.

Updike earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration in 1985 and a master’s degree in administrative science in 1987 from the University of North Dakota. She has also completed several executive training institutes through the College of Business at the University of Minnesota. She also has completed a comprehensive human resources unit that served some 1,500 campus employees. Her accomplishments have included development of a new employee compensation and classification system, development of a healthcare benefits package as well as development of an electronic processing system for integrating employment, personnel, payroll and budget functions.

“Barbara brings extensive knowledge in the employment and labor relations areas and a history of strong and innovative leadership to the position,” said WMU President Jack E. Anderson, honorary president of the Minnesota University Personnel Association. “We are absolutely delighted that she will be taking charge of this critical area and I am positive she will be a good addition to the University.”

At Mankato, Updike was responsible for a comprehensive human resources unit that served some 1,500 campus employees. Her accomplishments have included development of a new employee compensation and classification system, development of a healthcare benefits package as well as development of an electronic processing system for integrating employment, personnel, payroll and budget functions.

On campus

Hawkins reception set

The University community is invited to attend a reception Friday, Jan. 14, honoring Dr. Barbara Hawkins, dean for student safety, who is retiring this month from her job as a dispatcher after more than 31 years as a WMU employee.

The event will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. in the President’s Dining Room of the Bernhard Center.

Human resources

Service

These faculty and staff members are recognized for five, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 years of service in Employment and Human Resources:

15 years—Umar F. Abdul-Mutakallim, physical plant-building custodial and support services; Richard P. Atwell, Fetter Center; Jerry F. Fuss, accounts payable; and Robert E. Haner, physical plant-building maintenance services.

25 years—Robert J. Dlouhy, Career Services; Kathleen A. Goyer, management; and Carole A. VanDykken, physical plant-building custodial and support services.

30 years—Janice S. Cleveenger, physical plant-landscape/grounds maintenance; Stacie J. Dineen, physical plant-building maintenance services; Trace L. Sherburn, accounting; Danny L. Sluss, physical plant-building maintenance services; and Patricia B. Viard, family and consumer sciences.

On campus

VITAL INFORMATION—LINKS—It's Dorla Evans' job to maintain the vital links of information that help WMU foster lasting relationships with its alumni, donors and friends and provide them valuable services at the same time. That's no mean trick. As a data operations specialist in alumni and donor records, a part of advancement services in the Office of Advancement, Evans and two colleagues keep track of more than 200,000 active records.

"Naturally, I love the people part of my job the most," says Evans, a WMU staff member since 1991. "When someone, like she says of phone calls and e-mail messages she fields from constituents across the country and around the world. She especially enjoys helping alumni find other alumni through the University's alumni locator service. In response to a request by an alumnus or alumnus who wants to contact another graduate, Evans will contact that person by e-mail or postcard. That person can then decide whether or not to get in touch with the person who made the request.”

That’s how we protect the privacy of our alumni and donors and the complete and total confidentiality of our records," she stresses. Much of Evans’ career has been in information management. Before coming to WMU, she worked at Borgess Medical Center, where she gained a background in computerized information about instruments used in surgery. Away from work, Evans, who is single, is active in her church, where she teaches Sabbath school for 6- to 12-year-olds, and appreciates travel. Recently, Evans-Smith, an administrative assistant in chemistry, cooperated in the care of her mother, Sallie Evans, who is 80 and recently underwent hip replacement surgery. "I also love to go to movies," she says. (Photo by Neil Rankin)

On campus

Job profile results will help design compensation system

The University has begun the design and implementation of a new compensation system that is designed to offer a competitive package and support system for non-bargaining administrative, clerical, professional and technical employees.

Each of these employees was mailed a Job Profile Questionnaire earlier this week. Consultants from Towers Perrin will use the completed questionnaires to develop job groupings and identify benchmark jobs for market pricing. The final questionnaire must be returned to Human Resources by Jan. 21, 2000.

If you have a question about the questionnaire, or did not receive one, please call a member of the compensation staff at 7-3644.

On campus

Matthews to be feted

Members of the University community are invited to attend a Thursday, Jan. 13, reception marking the retirement of this month of Michael J. Matthews, university relations.

Matthews, who has served for 20 years as a counselor, director of communications and communications executive, will be honored at the event set for 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. in the lobby of Walton Hall.

On the move

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On the move
Floyd Pientka has been named the new general manager of WMUK, the University’s public radio station. Pientka, whose appointment was effective Jan. 1, replaced Garrard Macleod, who retired Dec. 31 after 40 years of service and 30 years as general manager of WMUK.A former student of the station’s curriculum, he brings both a wealth of experience and a commitment to the station’s current mission to his new role as manager of WMUK and its 12-person staff.

According to Provost Timothy Light, vice president for academic affairs, Pientka brings both a wealth of experience and a commitment to the station’s current mission to his new role as manager of WMUK and its 12-person staff.

When considering this appointment, I made calls to people around the country and talked with many professionals in the field, including the president of the NPR,” says Pientka. "Everybody said the same thing: WMUK’s focus is exactly right and even ahead of the curve for public radio stations. With changes in the satellite technology and the potential for direct transmission of national feeds to listeners, public radio stations need to focus on local programming and that’s exactly what WMUK has been doing. Under Floyd’s leadership, I am confident that effort will continue."

Pientka first joined the station in 1979 as an announcer and he was later named operations manager. He left the station briefly in 1983 for a stint at a Philadelphia public radio station, but returned to WMUK the following year as an announcer. He assumed his role as operations manager in WMUK in 1985 and he held that post until being named program director.

A Milwaukee native, Pientka earned a music and creative writing degree in 1970 from Lawrence University in Appleton, Wis., and worked as a writer and musician before launching his public radio career. He also earned a master’s degree in music performance (piano) from WMU in 1982.

Software

The College of Engineering and Applied Sciences in 1998 entered into several similar agreements that brought the University’s undergraduate engineering software products that cover a variety of engineering processes. The software now is used to address specific engineering issues related to the manufacturing process. In addition, the WMU’s Industrial Engineering and Manufacturing, engineering says that, together, the products WMU student engineers can now provide them in a unique position to be productive immediately after they graduate.

When teaching students about engineering, he says, “We’re allowing them to practice engineering as they will practice it in the industry. The software now at WMU is used by such automobile firms as DaimlerChrysler, Ford, General Motors and General Electric, aircraft manufacturers, British Aerospace, Learjet, and Pratt & Whitney; consumer and electronics firms like Sony and Samsung; and heavy equipment companies such as John Deere and Hitachi Machinery."

Pientka takes reins at WMUK

75 YEARS OF SERVICE—When three members of WMU’s 25 Year Club get together, more than 75 years of service to WMU is represented. That’s what happened here when President Floyd helped these three new members of the club celebrate their Nov. 30 induction into the group. The three were among 97 faculty and staff members added to the group this year, bringing its total to 322 active and 356 retired members. From left, Patricia A. Brown, finance and commercial law; Floyd; Kant S. Sandhu, University Video Services; and Wesley R. Carpenter, public safety. (Photo by Neil Rankin)