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SPE® ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF ACCE & REHKOPF SCHOLARSHIPS TO BE HONORED AT AUTOMOTIVE COMPOSITES CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION (ACCE) SEPT. 5 – 7, 2018

TROY (DETROIT) MICH.- The organizing committee for the SPE Automotive Composites Conference & Exhibition (ACCE) today announced the winners of the group's annual SPE ACCE scholarships sponsored by the Michigan Economic Development Corp. (Lansing, Mich., U.S.A., https://www.michiganbusiness.org) and the Dr. Jackie Rehkopf scholarship from an endowed fund that has been set up to honor the long-time SPE ACCE committee member, SPE Automotive Division board member, and automotive composites researcher. ACCE scholarship winners will be honored at the SPE ACCE, Sept. 5 -7, 2018 at the Suburban Collection Showplace in Novi, Mich., U.S.A. They are required to present the results of their research at the next year's SPE ACCE event, Sept. 4-6, 2019. Rehkopf scholarship winners are required to either present the results of their research at next year's SPE ACCE or publish them in an SPE journal. Both scholarships are administered as part of the SPE Foundation (Bethel, Conn., U.S.A., www.4spe.org).

The Michigan Economic Development Corp. (MEDC) is sponsoring a total of $8,000 USD in scholarships, for four awards for students pursuing advanced studies in a composites-related field. “We’re proud to support the ACCE program held in Michigan annually, helping to grow the automotive sector and advancing lightweighting with composites technology, bringing 900 attendees from five continents and 15 countries seeing Michigan as a leading resource for engineering talent and development,” said Eric Shreffler, MEDC Managing Director, Automotive Office.

“The four winners of the SPE ACCE scholarships ($2,000 USD each) are **Mr. Preetam Giri**, a PhD student at Michigan State University, (Lansing, Mich., U.S.A., https://msu.edu/), **Mr. Eric Schmid**, a PhD candidate at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology (SDSM&T) supported by the Composites and Polymer Engineering (CAPE) Lab (Rapid City, South Dakota, U.S.A., https://www.sdsmt.edu/CAPE), **Mr. Zhaogui Wang**, a PhD student at Baylor University, (Waco, Texas, U.S.A., https://www.baylor.edu/) and **Mr. Daniel Pulipati**, a MSc graduate and PhD candidate also from Baylor University.

The winner of the Rehkopf Scholarship is **Ms. Barbara DeButts**, a PhD candidate in Macromolecular Science and Engineering at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (commonly known as Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia, U.S.A., https://vt.edu).

Mr. Preetam Giri, presently a fourth year Ph.D. student, works with Dr. Ramani Narayan's Bio-based Materials Research Group (BMRG) at Michigan State University. His primary research involves application development for the polylactide (PLA) extrusion process in two main focus areas: reactive extrusion to chemically modify PLA and natural fiber reinforced PLA composites. The reactive extrusion work stems from a collaboration with Natur-Tec®, a division of Northern Technologies International Corporation, while the composite development is in conjunction with the Ford Motor Company. The current objective is to achieve a tough and durable biobased PLA composite for high-volume applications such as with Ford. By adapting the LFT process, the reinforcement fiber length is preserved, thus enabling improved fiber-matrix load transfer. Mr. Giri obtained his Bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering from the Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani – Hyderabad campus.

Mr. Eric Schmid is a PhD candidate at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology (SDSM&T) supported by the Composites and Polymer Engineering (CAPE) Lab. Herein, Eric is studying polymer composites fabricated with intentional anisotropic voids. These voids allow for substantial reductions in bulk density, while excellent mechanical and thermal performance are achieved with a variety of composite and nanocomposite additives. These lightweight materials are highly tailorable and well suited for a variety of transportation applications.

Outside of the lab, Eric is active in the Society for the Advancement of Material and Process Engineering (SAMPE). In addition to helping manage the local SAMPE student chapter, He recently

become the inaugural chair of the SAMPE North America Young Professionals. In addition to being a member of SAMPE, he is also a student member of SPE, MRS, and NSPE. Eric has a B.S. in both Chemistry and Mathematics from the University of Jamestown, as well as a M.S. in Chemical Engineering from the University of North Dakota.

Mr. Zhaogui Wang is currently investigating the process modeling of large format polymer composite additive manufacturing with the intent to gain a better understanding of the interactions between the flow and the fiber orientation. He states the significance of his research projects as, "A deeper interpretation of how fibers and the molten polymer matrix affect each other enables the fabrication of composite parts with better mechanical performances. Further, the combination of additive manufacturing and discontinuous fiber filled thermoplastics unlocks great potential in creating highly customized yet lightweight parts and tooling. This ultimately reduces the manufacturing cost in automotive and aerospace industries, to name a few."

Zhaogui achieved his Bachelor of Science degree from Dalian University of Technology in Dalian, China. He received his Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering in 2016 and is on track to complete his Doctorate in 2019, both from Baylor University. Besides academic research life, he is heavily involved in the development of the local SPE chapter at Baylor, serving as the secretary in 2017 and 2018. With his contribution, the Baylor SPE student chapter has become one of the most distinguished groups among the SPE student chapters over the country.

Mr. Daniel Pulipati began his impassioned academic journey at the Indian Institute of Technology, Dhanbad in the fall of 2009 and completed his Bachelor of Technology degree in 2013. In 2016, he completed his Master of Science at the Milwaukee School of Engineering and is now on track to defend his dissertation, at Baylor University, in 2019. His research focuses on modeling the long-term performance of blow molded recycled polyolefin post-consumer/post-industrial waste reinforced with glass fiber. These durable materials have several novel applications such as in railroad ties.

Daniel continues to serve as the president of the Baylor University SPE student chapter since 2017. As part of the SPE student chapter, Daniel has helped coordinate monthly industry guest presentations, several local facility tours, and promoted STEM involvement in schools through various engineering activities in the greater Waco area. Under his leadership, the SPE chapter has won several awards at Baylor and nationally.

***The Dr. Jackie Rehkopf Scholarship* is sponsored by the SPE® Automotive Division, the SPE® Composites Division, and the generous donations of friends and family**

Ms. Barbara DeButts has worked to improve the sustainability of commodity polymers by incorporating economical protein additives into synthetic cis-1,4-polyisoprene rubber (IR) and poly(vinyl alcohol) (PVA). She is presently studying as a PhD candidate in Macromolecular Science and Engineering at Virginia Tech where her work has applications in various industries, most prominently, in the automotive and flexible packaging industries. As a student with a non-engineering background, i.e., Barbara received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2006, SPE has been pivotal in expanding her knowledge of the polymer engineering industry. At her first ANTEC® conference in 2016, she became involved with SPE's Next Generation Advisory Board (NGAB) from

which she was inspired to start a SPE student chapter at Virginia Tech. She served as President of the VT SPE Student Chapter in 2017 and has been an active member of SPE, NGAB, and the VT SPE Student Chapter ever since. She will defend her dissertation in the upcoming academic year (2018-2019) and intends to pursue a career in the growing polymer engineering industry. She has enjoyed her research on the practical utilization of proteins in rubber composites and plans to continue to develop unique automotive composites in the future.

Held annually in suburban Detroit, the ACCE draws over 900 speakers, exhibitors, sponsors and attendees and provides an environment dedicated solely to discussion, education 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. About one-third of attendees work for automotive and light truck, agriculture, tuck & bus or aviation OEMs and another 25% represent tier suppliers. Attendees also work for composite materials processing equipment, additives, or reinforcement suppliers; trade associations, consultancies, university and government labs; media; and investment banks. Since 2001, the show has been produced by the SPE Automotive & Composites Divisions.

The mission of SPE is to promote scientific and engineering knowledge relating to plastics worldwide and to educate industry, academia, and the public about these advances. SPE's Automotive Division is active in educating, promoting, recognizing, and communicating technical accomplishments in all phases of plastics and plastic-based composite developments in the global transportation industry. SPE's Composites Division does the same with a focus on plastic-based composites in multiple industries. Topic areas include applications, materials, processing, equipment, tooling, design, and development. For more information see **www.speautomotive.com and www.specomposites.org**. For more information on the ***Society of Plastics Engineers***, see **www.4spe.org**.

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