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SPE® ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF ACCE & REHKOPF SCHOLARSHIPS TO BE HONORED AT AUTOMOTIVE COMPOSITES CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION (ACCE) SEPT. 4 – 6, 2019

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 and the Dr. Jackie Rehkopf scholarships 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. SPE ACCE and Rehkopf scholarship winners will be honored at the SPE ACCE, Sept. 4 - 6, 2019 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. 9 -11, 2020. 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 ACCE Scholarships (a total of $6,000 USD) are sponsored by the SPE Automotive and SPE Composites Divisions. Three scholarships ($2,000 USD each) are awarded to students pursuing advanced studies in a composites-related field. The three winners of the SPE ACCE scholarships are **Priya Venkatraman**, a Ph.D. candidate at Virginia Tech (Blacksburg, Virginia, USA, https://vt.edu) **Bradley Sutliff**, a Ph.D. candidate also at Virginia Tech, and **Martin Eichers**, a senior at North Dakota State University (Fargo, North Dakota, USA, https://www.ndsu.edu).

The Dr. Jackie Rehkopf Scholarships are sponsored by the SPE Automotive Division, the SPE Composites Division and the generous donations of friends and family. Two winners selected this year for the Rehkopf Scholarship ($2,500 USD each) are **Mariana Desireé Reale Batista,** a Ph.D. candidate at Michigan State University (East Lansing, Michigan, USA, https://msu.edu) and **Akshata Kulkarni,** a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Akron (Akron, Ohio, USA, https://www.uakron.edu).

Priya Venkatraman
Ph.D. Candidate, Macromolecular Science and Engineering
Virginia Tech
2019 ACCE Scholar

Priya Venkatraman is currently a Ph.D. candidate pursuing a degree in Macromolecular Science and Engineering (MACR) in the Macromolecules Innovation Institute (MII) at Virginia Tech. Her research is comprised of the design, processing, and characterization of nanocellulose composites with applications in producing environmentally sustainable, lightweight material alternatives for use in various industries including automotive and aerospace. Through her active involvement in the nanocellulose community, Priya was elected chair of the Technical Association of Pulp and Paper Industry (TAPPI) Nano Student Committee in 2018, where she previously served as the Student Engagement Subcommittee Chair. Her involvement with SPE has been an integral part of her graduate career as well, facilitating her knowledge of the polymer engineering community. Priya is currently organizing and serving as co-chair of the National Graduate Research Polymer Conference, which is set to be hosted at Virginia Tech in 2020. She intends to pursue a career in research and development to improve industrial-scale polymer engineering processes and develop materials with unique and enhanced properties, while being more mindful of the environmental impact. Priya will be defending her dissertation in the upcoming academic year (2020).

Bradley Sutliff
Ph.D. Candidate, Macromolecular Science and Engineering
Virginia Tech
2019 ACCE Scholar

Bradley Sutliff is a third-year Ph.D. student at Virginia Tech studying Macromolecular Science and Engineering, under the advisement of Dr. Michael J. Bortner. Brad studies the rheology of cellulose nanomaterials under similar conditions to current industrial processes. Prior to this he earned a Master's degree in Biomedical Engineering at Syracuse University. At SU, he manipulated bacteria to produce polyhydroxyalkanoates, a category of biopolymers that show promise for medical devices and environmental degradation. As a staunch supporter of developing bioplastics for both medical and general usage, he understands such materials will not succeed if they cannot meet current industry needs. This has focused Brad's career on not only studying bio-based materials, but also interacting with the plastics professionals of the world to identify their requirements and questions. To this end, SPE has been a tremendous help, allowing Brad to meet many professionals at his first ANTEC® in 2019. He is currently in his second year as the president of the SPE student chapter at Virginia Tech and has recently joined SPE's Next Generation Advisory Board. This year Brad will be focusing on growing VT's student chapter, and on planning the National Graduate Research Polymer Conference (NGRPC) for July 2020 at Virginia Tech.

Martin Eichers
North Dakota State University
2019 ACCE Scholar

Martin Eichers is a senior at North Dakota State University (NDSU) majoring in Mechanical Engineering with minors in Chemistry and Coatings and Polymeric Materials. Martin is the project lead for the Formula SAE Electric team and president of the 3D Printing Club at NDSU. As a research assistant in the Mechanical Engineering Department, Martin works to develop low-cost biocomposite PLA 3D printing filament by designing various material formulations and manipulating manufacturing conditions to produce the strongest filament. After extruding a new filament, he determines its properties through mechanical testing. He became interested in polymeric materials after learning more about 3D printing. His career goals include providing 3D printing and materials expertise to assist in the development of new technologies for the aerospace, automotive, and biomedical industries.

Mariana Desireé Reale Batista
Ph.D. Candidate, Materials Science and Engineering
Michigan State University
2019 Jackie Rehkopf Scholar

Mariana Desireé Reale Batista is currently completing her Ph.D. studies in Materials Science and Engineering at Michigan State University in the Composite Materials and Structures Center under Professor Lawrence Drzal's supervision. Her research is focused on developing lighter, safer, more sustainable, and cost-effective materials for components used in automotive and aerospace industries. She is investigating polymer composites, specifically the modification of the fiber-matrix interphase with nanoparticles, to simultaneously strengthen and toughen the composites and impart multifunctionality to them. She has been optimizing the adhesion of carbon fiber reinforced composites through the incorporation of Cellulose Nanocrystals and optimizing the mechanical properties of bamboo fiber reinforced composites by incorporating Graphene Oxide at the composite interphase. She interned at the Ford Motor Company (Research and Innovation Center), where she developed lightweight hybrid cellulose-inorganic reinforcement composites for automotive applications. More recently she interned at NASA (AMES Research Center) developing flexible UV sensors. Batista graduated *summa cum laude* with a B.S. degree in Mechatronics Engineering and received an M.B.A. degree in Administration and Business Management, both from Universidade Salvador - UNIFACS, Brazil. While at MSU she has been involved in many organizations as a volunteer, providing assistance in outreach activities dedicated for young students.

Akshata Kulkarni
Ph.D. Candidate, Polymer Engineering
University of Akron
2019 Jackie Rehkopf Scholar

Akshata Kulkarni started her career in polymers in 2012 when she opted for a Bachelor's degree in Polymer Engineering at the Institute of Chemical Technology in Mumbai. During her undergraduate years, she gained hands-on experience in the field through industrial and academic internships, and was chosen as the Summer Research Fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences in May 2014. At the University of Akron, Akshata is currently pursuing her Ph.D. under the guidance of Dr. Sadhan C. Jana. As a part of her doctoral dissertation, she worked on developing energy efficient vulcanizing systems for low energy loss tire tread compounds. The work involved using benzocyclobutene based crosslinking agents for obtaining improved properties of the final tread compound, as well as a lower crosslinking time. This project was executed under the aegis of CenTiRe and was a collaborative effort between Dr. Sadhan Jana and Dr. Coleen Pugh from the College of Polymer Science at the University of Akron. Currently, she is working on utilizing highly porous aerogel materials for separating oil-water mixtures. Along with her academic accolades and research experience, she also served as the President of the Akron SPE Student Chapter during the 2017-2018 academic year. Recently, she received the Ohio Rubber Group Graduate Student Award as well as the Paul Glasgow Student Scholarship from the ACS Rubber Division. Akshata intends to work in the polymer industry after her graduation.

About ACCE:

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, 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, 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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