

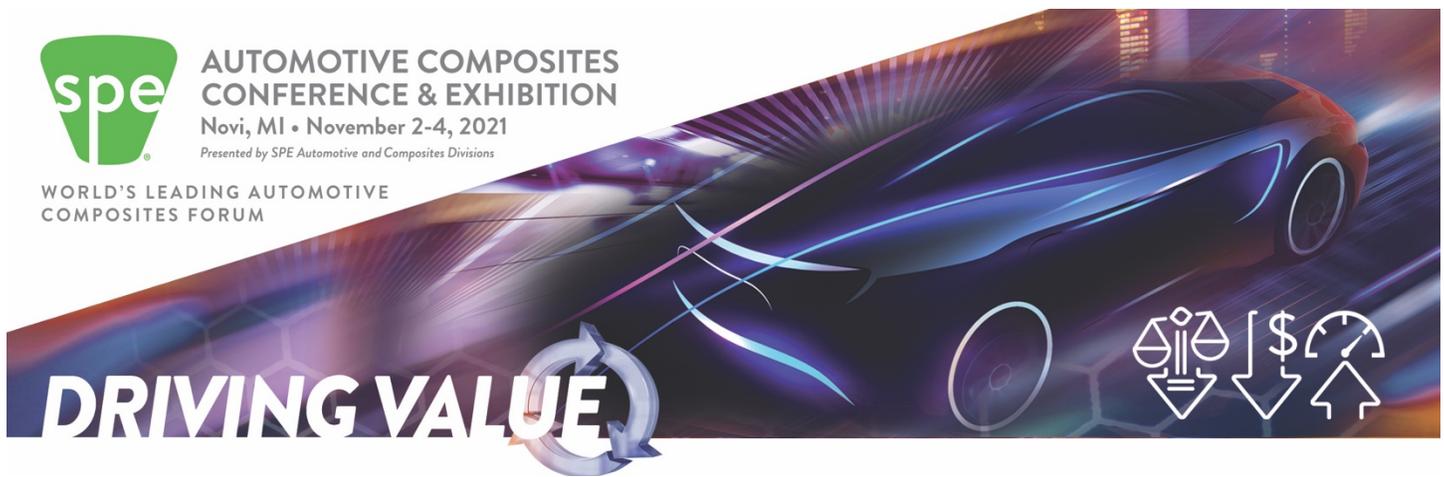


## AUTOMOTIVE COMPOSITES CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION

Novi, MI • November 2-4, 2021

Presented by SPE Automotive and Composites Divisions

WORLD'S LEADING AUTOMOTIVE  
COMPOSITES FORUM



# DRIVING VALUE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 24 AUGUST 2021**

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**SPE® ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF ACCE & REHKOPF SCHOLARSHIPS TO BE HONORED AT  
AUTOMOTIVE COMPOSITES CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION (ACCE) EVENT NOV. 2-4, 2021**

- **THIS YEAR'S ACCE SCHOLARSHIP IS NAMED IN HONOR OF THE LATE NIPPANI RAO, A LONG-TIME SPE ACCE VOLUNTEER AND MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR THE SPE AUTOMOTIVE AND COMPOSITES DIVISIONS**

**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 scholarship and the Dr. Jackie Rehkopf scholarship. This year's ACCE Scholarship is named in honor of the late Nippani Rao, a long-time SPE ACCE volunteer and member of the board of directors for the SPE Automotive and Composites Divisions. The Dr. Jackie Rehkopf scholarship award is provided from an endowed fund that has been set up to honor her as a 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 Event, Nov. 2 – 4, 2021. Both scholarships are administered as part of the SPE Foundation (Danbury, Conn., U.S.A., [www.4spe.org](http://www.4spe.org)).

The ACCE Scholarship is sponsored by the SPE Automotive and SPE Composites Divisions. The scholarship (\$2,000 USD) is awarded to a student pursuing advanced studies in a composites-related field. The winner of the 2021 SPE ACCE scholarship is **Jomin Thomas**, a PhD candidate pursuing a doctoral degree in Polymer Engineering at The University of Akron (Akron, Ohio, USA (<https://www.uakron.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 **Lauren Slann**, a graduate student pursuing a Master of Science degree in

Automotive Engineering at Clemson University (Clemson, South Carolina, USA (<https://www.clemson.edu/>)) and

**Sara Andrea Simon**, a PhD candidate pursuing a doctoral at the Polymer Engineering Center (PEC), at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (<https://pec.engr.wisc.edu/>).



**Jomin Thomas, PhD Candidate, Polymer Engineering, The University of Akron, 2021 ACCE Scholar**

Jomin Thomas is a polymer enthusiast and technologist. With an undergraduate degree in Chemical Engineering from the Visvesvaraya National Institute of Technology in India, his passion for polymers started during his internship in plastics companies in India and Saudi Arabia. He earned a Master of Science degree in Polymer Technology from Cochin University of Science and Technology and began an internship in Asian Paints Limited, culminating in a permanent researcher position in the Research and Development Center working on the sustainable raw material synthesis of coating materials.

Currently, Jomin is pursuing his doctoral degree in Polymer Engineering as a member of Dr. Mark D. Soucek's Research Group at The University of Akron. His research concentrates on environmentally benign coatings and composites from bio-renewable resources like soybean oil, linseed oil, and castor oil, which are central to his proposed PhD thesis. Furthermore, he works towards replacing cobalt driers in the alkyd coating system and assessing the degradation of tire and road wear particles in the soil. After his graduation, he aspires to be part of a Research and Development team in a company that researches polymer sustainability.



**Lauren Slann, Master of Science Degree Candidate, Automotive Engineering, Clemson University  
Dr. Jackie Rehkopf Scholar**

Lauren Slann is currently a graduate student at Clemson University pursuing a Master of Science degree in Automotive Engineering on the manufacturing and materials track. She works at the Clemson University International Center for Automotive Research.

Lauren recently graduated in May with her Bachelor of Science degree in Materials Science and Engineering and a minor in Chemistry. During her undergraduate career, she has worked in 3 different research labs including organic chemistry, materials science, and automotive engineering at the Clemson Composites Center. In these labs, her research has focused on bio-based, recyclable polymers using renewable feedstocks and green chemistry techniques, as well as bioluminescent polystyrene nanoparticles. She has presented this research in her classes and has published a paper on sulfur recyclable polymers in the *Journal of Polymer Chemistry*. In addition to this, she previously interned with General Electric (GE) Aviation where she worked with a team of interns to analyze a potential new production site and product inventory. This upcoming summer, she is interning with Corning Optical Communications and hopes to intern with an automotive company next summer.

Upon completion of her Master of Science degree, Lauren plans to work in sustainable materials engineering to reduce the footprint of common processes and products in the automotive industry. She hopes to lead a career in research and innovation, establishing green protocols for production processes as well as minimizing waste and maximizing life cycles of products.



**Sara Andrea Simon, PhD Candidate at the Polymer Engineering Center (PEC),  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
2021 Dr. Jackie Rehkopf Scholar**

Sara Andrea Simon is a PhD candidate at the Polymer Engineering Center (PEC), University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her research interests focus on characterization and process simulation of discontinuous fiber composites. In the past five years at the PEC, she has investigated fiber breakage, fiber-matrix separation, and fiber orientation during mold filling. Since 2019, she has worked in collaboration with Volkswagen on a new microcellular injection molding technology to advance lightweight automotive constructions. In particular, she developed a mathematical proof of the technology's concept and studied the gas pressure operating window of the process. Currently, she is validating commercial mold filling simulation tools and their ability to describe the foaming behavior seen with this new technology. Sara holds a Master of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering as well as a Master of Science degree in Natural Sciences. Recently she got nominated as a Rising Star in Mechanical Engineering by Stanford University. She is committed to helping students get involved in polymer and composite applications. To date, she has assisted more than 80 students in joining the PEC to conduct hands-on research.

## About ACCE:

The 2021 ACCE will feature three keynotes, one panel discussion, approximately 60 technical presentations, and over 40 sponsors presenting advances in materials, processes, and equipment for both thermoset and thermoplastic composites in a wide variety of transportation applications. Daily networking opportunities will enhance the value of the event that expects to draw over 400 attendees worldwide. The Automotive and Composites Divisions of the Society of Plastics Engineers (SPE®) jointly produce the ACCE to educate the industry about the benefits of composites in automotive, light and heavy-duty truck, off-highway vehicles, and other ground transportation applications.

Held annually in suburban Detroit, the ACCE 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.

**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](http://www.speautomotive.com) and [www.specomposites.org](http://www.specomposites.org). For more information on the **Society of Plastics Engineers**, see [www.4spe.org](http://www.4spe.org).  
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