



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 2 OCTOBER 2025

Media Contact: Teri Chouinard, SPE ACCE MarCom Chair, 248.701.8003, intuitgroup@gmail.com

SPE® ACCE 2025 Highlights 25 Years of Advancing Mobility with Composites

SPE® Automotive Composites Conference & Expo (ACCE) 2025 included 73 Technical Presentations, 25 Student Posters, 43 Sponsorships, 32 Exhibits, 4 Keynote Addresses and a panel discussion on the Evolution of the Industry and Composites Over the Past 25 Years of ACCE.

In addition, more than \$13,000 was awarded in student scholarships & 25 students were provided with free registrations and hotel accommodations

TROY (DETROIT), MICH. - The SPE® Automotive Composites Conference & Expo (ACCE) event was held September 3 – 5, 2025, at the Suburban Collection Showplace Diamond Banquet and Conference Center in Novi, Michigan. It was the 25th anniversary of the SPE® ACCE produced by the SPE Automotive and Composites Divisions. The conference provided a unique space for networking, technical exchange, and showcasing innovations shaping the future of automotive composites.

“The presentations in the technical program were excellent this year, including the poster presentation by the students. It was great to see the students showcased and the direction the composites industry is headed in,” said Anthony Console, Sale Leader, Owens Corning. “There was very good booth traffic, and we had activity at our booth constantly. It was great to see such a high level of engagement and interest in our offerings,” added Laura Strange, Sales Leader, Owens Corning.

“This year’s 25th Anniversary of the ACCE was the best yet!” said Eric Haiss, Senior Business Development and Engineering Executive, IDI Composites International, “We saw nearly every major North American OEM, with all of them having multiple people in attendance,” Haiss added.

“The turnout at the 25th Anniversary ACCE has been great to see,” said Greg Spaeth, Project Engineer, Plastics Engineering Company (PLENCO) and SPE Thermoset Division Board Member. “It’s clear that ACCE remains a key place for building connections, sharing expertise, and shaping the future of composites,” added Spaeth.

ACCE Leadership & Summary:

“As we celebrate 25 Years of Advancing Mobility at ACCE 2025, I’m delighted to see both familiar faces and new pioneers coming together,” said Dr. David Jack, Professor – Department of Mechanical Engineering at Baylor University and ACCE 2025 Co-Chair. “Over the past quarter-century, composites have evolved from promising materials to essential enablers of innovation—in automotive, aerospace, sustainable transport, and beyond. Looking ahead, we continue to drive solutions that are lighter, stronger, more efficient—and that push the boundaries of mobility in all its forms.”

“This year’s ACCE showcases how far composites have come over the past 25 years—transforming from emerging materials into indispensable solutions for mobility and beyond,” said Dr. Mike Siwajek, Vice President of Research and Development at CSP and ACCE 2025 Co-Chair. “Advances in materials and manufacturing are unlocking even greater possibilities for performance, sustainability, and design freedom, and it’s exciting to see our industry driving the next wave of innovation together.”

A number of composite leaders from industry and academia provided additional direction and support for the event. The technical program included 73 presentations and was led by Dr. Hendrik Mainka, Principal Program Lead and Head of Volkswagen Group Innovation Hub, Knoxville and Dr. Dominik Dörr, Co-Founder & Managing Director of Simutence. Additional support was provided from Jitesh Desai, Program Treasurer for the SPE Automotive Division. Dr. Leonardo Simon, Professor at the University of Waterloo, led the ACCE Parts Competition that included 10 nominations. Dr. Douglas Smith, Professor at Baylor University, Chair of Student Engagement, led the Student Poster Competition that included 25 presentations and 23 mini oral presentations. Teri Chouinard, President of Intuit Group, provided leadership as ACCE Sponsorship Chair with 43 sponsorships and 32 exhibits and provided Admin support for the Technical Program and Event Management overall.

Keynotes presented at the ACCE 2025 event included:

“Composites Enable Innovative, Efficient, and Recyclable Vehicles and Can Help to Change the Nature of Mass Production” by Casey Putsch, President, Genius Garage Educational Programs, “Composites and Circular Vehicle Technologies at Volkswagen Group Innovation” by Kristin von Szadkowski, Lead Sustainable Product Innovation, Volkswagen AG, “Decade of Innovation: IACMI's Impact” by Chad Duty, CEO, IACMI, and “Balancing Multiple Objectives in Composites Design” by Amanda Nummy, Senior Polymer Materials Engineer, Hyundai America Technical Center Inc.

A Panel Discussion on “The Evolution of the Industry and Composites Over the Past 25 Years of ACCE,” was moderated by Dale Brosius, President of Brosius Management Consulting & Commercialization Manager at IACMI. Panelists included Frank Henning, Institute Director at Fraunhofer ICT, Michael Connolly, Consultant at MC Material Design, Alper Kiziltas, Senior Advanced Materials Engineer at Amazon, Mike Siwajek, Vice President of Research and Development at CSP and David Jack, Graduate Program Director for Baylor's Materials Science and Engineering program. Their perspectives highlighted both the remarkable progress made in composite technology and the collaborative innovations still needed to drive the industry toward a more sustainable future.

The ACCE 2025 technical program included 73 presentations on advances in the following categories: Additive Manufacturing & 3D Printing, Advances in Thermoplastics Composites, Advances in Thermoset Composites, Bonding, Joining & Finishing, AI/Machine Learning & Data Driven Solutions, Carbon Composites & Reinforcements, Composites in Electric Vehicles, Enabling Technologies, Sustainable Composites, Design, Modeling, and Simulations of Composites.

Best Paper Awards:

Excellence in technical writing is recognized annually at ACCE by honoring those who have presented the best papers at the conference. The 2025 Best Paper Award winners received the highest average ratings by conference peer reviewers, including members of the ACCE planning committee and other industry experts. First, second, and third place winners were recognized and honored at the event in the “Best Paper Award” competition. Tymon Nieduzak, a PhD student at Columbia University, won the Best Paper Award for his paper “Multi-functional Composites for Battery Enclosure Structures – Self-Health Monitoring Technology”. Second place recognition was awarded to Rishabh Pammi, PhD student at Purdue University, for his paper “Compression Properties and Impact Energy Absorption of Carbon Fiber-Reinforced Composite Honeycomb Core for Automotive Structural Applications.” Third place recognition was awarded to Clayton Hearn, a PhD student at Baylor University for his paper “Automated tracking and identification of ply-drops in tapered composite laminates through ultrasonic testing”.

At the conference, the authors received certificates, and their papers were highlighted in the ACCE program schedule. Their papers will also be published in the SPE Automotive and Composites Division newsletters and other industry publications.

Student Poster Competition:

Students from across the United States featured innovative research related to polymer composite materials and manufacturing technologies for automotive applications via the annual ACCE Poster Competition. This yearly event enables students to meet with industry professionals and learn about career opportunities as a scientist, engineer, researcher and other professions in the field. Automotive OEMs, tier suppliers, and others appreciate the introduction to the next generation of automotive composites engineering professionals and the opportunity

to potentially hire them in the future. Dr. Douglas Smith, Professor at Baylor University, led the Student Poster Competition again this year. The 2025 ACCE Student Poster Competition included 25 posters from 10 different universities and two high schools. 23 students also gave mini-oral 5 minute presentations to conference attendees to share their research.

This year's poster competition winners are:

Graduate Category:

1st Place: "Multifunctional Composites – Self-Health Monitoring Technology Smart Electric Vehicle Battery Enclosure" Tymon Nieduzak, Columbia University

2nd Place: "Rapid Inspections Using Flash Thermography to Identify and Quantify BVID in CFRPs" Gabriela Meriano, Baylor University

3rd Place: "Automation with AI: Improving the Quantification of Barely Visible Impact Damage in CFRP Laminates from Ultrasonic Testing Data" Rachel Van Lear, Baylor University

High School / Undergraduate Category:

1st Place: "Exploring Effects of Additives on the Thermal Stability and Processability of Polypropylene for Use in Paper-Fiber Polypropylene Composites with Automotive Applications" Jocelyn Hess, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

2nd Place: "Advancement of Bio-Based Natural Fiber-Polyurethane Sandwich Panels with Corrugated Paper Core for Automotive Interiors" Muna Shakour, Pioneer High School, University of Michigan

3rd Place: "Additive Manufacturing with Hybrid Continuous and Discontinuous Fiber Systems" Thomas Schmitz, Purdue University

Scholarship Awards:

The ACCE Scholarships (a total of \$8,000 USD) are sponsored by the SPE Automotive and SPE Composites Divisions. Five ACCE Scholarships (\$1,000- \$2,000 USD each) are awarded to students pursuing advanced studies in a composites-related field. The ACCE Scholarship Committee was led by Assoc. Prof. Zeynep Iyigundogdu, Adana Alparslan Türkeş Science and Technology University, Dr. Alper Kiziltas, Sr. Advanced Materials Engineer, Amazon Lab126 and Drew Geda – Senior Polymer Materials Development Engineer – Hyundai America Technical Center, Inc.

The five winners of the SPE ACCE scholarships are Akash Padatara, a PhD Student in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, TN was awarded \$2,000; Kunle Adeyemo, a Dual-Degree PhD Student in the Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering and the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Michigan State University in East Lansing, MI awarded was \$2,000; Eonyeon Jo, a PhD student in Sustainable and Advanced

Composite Material Manufacturing at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in Knoxville, TN awarded \$2,000; Malik Hassan, a PhD student in Biological Engineering at the University of Guelph, in Guelph, Ontario was awarded \$1,000; and Jocelyn Hess, an Undergraduate Student in Materials Science & Engineering at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in Knoxville, TN was also awarded \$1,000.

The Dr. Jackie Rehkopf Scholarships (a total of \$5,000) are sponsored by the SPE Automotive Division, the SPE Composites Division and the generous donations of friends and family. Three winners selected this year for the Rehkopf Scholarship are Kendra Allen, a PhD Student in Energy Science and Engineering at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in Knoxville, TN was awarded \$2,000; Clara Kramer, a PhD Student in Chemical and Biological Engineering at the University of British Columbia, in Vancouver, BC was awarded \$1,500; and Gabriela Meriano, a PhD Student in Materials Science and Engineering at Baylor University in Waco, TX also awarded \$1,500.

Part Competition:

This year's ACCE Part Competition was led once again by Dr. Leonardo Simon from the University of Waterloo, who previously served as the 2021, 2022 and 2023 ACCE Co-Chair. A panel of automotive composites industry experts, from industry and academia, studied the 10 nominations that were submitted in advance of the event and reviewed the parts onsite and voted for the Most Innovative Material and/or Process Applications in Production Part and Prototype Part Categories. Nominations were judged on the impact and trendsetting nature of the application, including materials of construction, processing methods, assembly methods, and other enabling technologies that made the application possible. Nominations emphasized the benefits of design, weight and cost reduction, functional integration, and improved performance. A separate prize, the People's Choice award, was selected by vote of conference attendees.

Here are the winners:

1. Most Innovative Part in the Process Innovation - Prototype Part Category:

LFT-Tape-Sandwich Underbody Demonstrator with Rib Pressing, submitted by Simutence

2. Most Innovative Part in the Process Innovation – Production Part Category:

Large Format, Structural CFRTP Truck Bed Liner, submitted by Re:Build Manufacturing

3. Most Innovative Production Part in Materials Innovation:

Multifunctional Composite EV Battery Enclosure, submitted by General Motors, CSP

4. Most Innovative Prototype Part Materials Innovation:

Thermoplastic Structural Sandwich Battery Enclosure, submitted by Kautex

5. People's Choice Award:

Volkswagen ID.4 Interior Door Handle Bezel, submitted by Baylor University and Volkswagen North America Group in the Process Innovation - Prototype Category.

ACCE Sponsors:

The 2025 SPE Automotive Composites Conference & Expo (ACCE) was made possible by the support of Sponsors including:

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Held annually in suburban Detroit, the ACCE currently draws approximately 400 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, Asia/Pacific and South America as well as North America. About 20% 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. ACCE has been jointly produced by the SPE Automotive and Composites Divisions since 2001.

For more info on ACCE go to: <https://speautomotive.com/acce-conference/>.

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 info go to: <https://speautomotive.com/> and <https://composites.4spe.org/>. For more information on the *Society of Plastics Engineers*, see www.4spe.org.

The next ACCE is scheduled for Sept. 9 – 10, 2026. An “Early Bird Discount” is available to sponsors who commit to supporting the ACCE 2026 event in 2025 and process payment by December 31, 2025. For more info contact lnuitgroup@gmail.com

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