

Tuesday, April 17, 2007

Volume 02, Issue 15

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PCI opens plant, labs, and programs to high school students

Last month, the Paper Engineering Open House attracted many Michigan high school students to the Parkview Campus of the CEAS to learn about careers in the paper industry, to examine WMU's paper facilities, to enjoy hands-on paper engineering activities, and to learn about the Paper Technology Foundation (PTF) scholarship program.

The Department of Paper Engineering, Chemical Engineering, and Imaging (PCI) has been hosting similar events for the past two years. According to **Dr. Said AbuBakr**, PCI department chair, over 100 students and parents attended from Grand Rapids, Battle Creek, Muskegon, Escanaba, and all over the Detroit area. "These are talented high school students who have never heard of paper engineering," he said. "These events explain the pulp and paper industry."

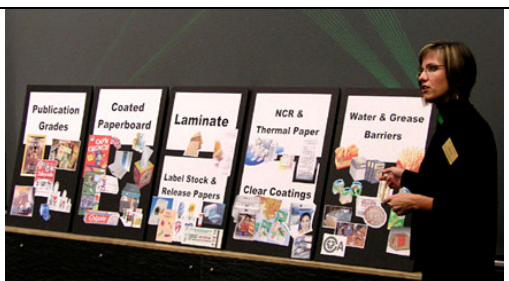


Michigan high school seniors and their parents at the Paper Engineering Open House, Sat., March 17, 2007

The event began with a light breakfast and welcome. **Nichole Perk**, paper programs' specialist, then reviewed the various careers available to those who earn degrees in paper engineering and science and the other engineering degrees that often collaborate on paper projects. "Paper engineering careers are limitless," she said.

According to Perk, almost all students can find a paper engineering career to suit their personalities. She listed a wide variety of occupations available to those who earn paper degrees and the various other engineering degrees that work with paper. "You can work with \$500 million machines, tackle environmental concerns, improve colors

Nichole Perk describes the broad range of paper coatings and the vast number of opportunities for paper engineering related careers.



Jan Walter (left on steps), general manager of the pilot plants, describes the \$30 million paper coating machine and the operation of the pilot plant, which serves a number of private customers.



and coatings, or work with radio frequency identification labels (RFIDs)," Perk told the students.

The audience also watched an industry video that put the large size of paper machines in perspective before **Jan Walter**, general manager for the pilot plants, provided a tour of the WMU pilot plant.

Students participated in three lab demos. "It's really important for these students to begin envisioning themselves working in our program," Perk said.

In the coating lab, the students each coated a sheet of paper under the direction of **Dr. Margaret Joyce**, whom Perk described as "our resident coating expert" for the research Joyce has done in paper coating. Joyce first demonstrated a drawdown for students who then coated their own sheets before running them through a calender.

Other lab demos were directed by PCI professor **Dr. Raja Aravamuthan**, lab coordinator **Matthew Stoops**, and grad student **Ali Fadel**.



PCI professor **Dr. Margaret Joyce** demonstrates paper coating drawdown for the high school students, who then coated their own sheets of paper.

John Bergin, PTF managing director, reviewed scholarship opportunities, and the event concluded with lunch when the guest students were given PCI tee shirts.

Opinions and ideas, please! Send your thoughts on this article or your suggestions for future article topics to the editor, Jerrie Fiala, at jerrie.fiala@wmich.edu Thank you.