New Engineering Professorship Propels Great Lakes Energy Institute, Institute for Advanced Materials, and Supports Hiring Initiative

Case Western Reserve University alumnus Thomas W. Seitz and his wife, Nancy, have endowed a new chair at the Case School of Engineering. The Thomas W. and Nancy P. Seitz Professorship in Advanced Materials and Energy is the second endowed chair supporting the efforts of the Great Lakes Energy Institute (GLEI).

The professorship represents the first philanthropic investment in the Engineering Strategic Hiring Initiative, which aims to attract outstanding scientists in the school’s priority areas of advanced materials, energy, and human health. Launched last spring, the effort targets professors committed to collaboration on interdisciplinary work. It also focuses on enhancing diversity of the engineering school’s faculty.

“This generous gift will help accelerate our efforts to recruit individuals eager to work across boundaries to address some of the world’s greatest scientific challenges,” President Barbara R. Snyder said. “We are profoundly grateful to the Seitz family for recognizing the significance of this initiative.”

The university created the energy institute in 2008 with seed funding that included a $3.6 million start-up grant from The Cleveland Foundation. The GLEI’s mission is to enable the transition to advanced sustainable energy generation, storage, distribution and utilization, through coordinated research, development and education. The first endowed chair in energy—The Milton and Tamar Maltz Chair in Energy Innovation—was announced in 2008.

This gift will also support the Institute for Advanced Materials, which was launched in the spring of 2010. Case Western Reserve has significant strengths in advanced materials with close to 100 faculty members across the University, including Medicine, Dental, Arts & Sciences, and Engineering.

“This generous gift allows the School of Engineering to simultaneously build our faculty expertise in advanced materials and energy—two key areas in our interdisciplinary approach to research and programs,” said Norman C. Tien, dean and Nord Professor of Engineering, Case School of Engineering.

Thomas Seitz, who is senior vice president for Strategic Excellence Initiatives at The Sherwin-Williams Co., said the strategic focus on the hiring initiative and the university’s regional economic impact were both factors in the couple’s commitment, as was the concept of giving back to his alma mater.

“The superb technical education I received at Case was only part of the story. Learning how to learn and developing problem solving skills made me a lifelong student,” Seitz said. “Those combined abilities have served me well throughout my business career.”

Thomas W. Seitz joined Sherwin-Williams in June of 1970, as a formulator in the A. W. Steudel Technical Center in Chicago. Since then he has performed in a variety of positions in technical, engineering, manufacturing, logistics, and general management roles for the company.

Seitz also spent six years as co-owner of a retail and commercial building materials business. He holds an MBA degree from the University of Chicago and a BS in engineering from Case Institute of Technology. He has served on the boards of Alsher Titania LLC and New Life Community Transitional Employment & Housing Program for homeless families. He is a key volunteer on a number of Case School of Engineering committees and is currently serving as the co-chair for the university-wide Corporate Visiting Committee.

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