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**Virginia Tech alumnus provides critical junior-level faculty support for engineering education**

BLACKSBURG, Va., Jan. 24, 2006 — In 2003, Virginia Tech's College of Engineering commenced an innovative Faculty Fellows program, designed to acknowledge and reward faculty in the junior ranks who have shown exceptional merit in research, teaching and/or service. At the time, each recipient received \$5,000 a year for up to three years as discretionary operating funds.

To further build this program, mechanical engineering alumnus John R. Jones, III of Dublin, Ohio, has created an endowment with a gift of \$600,000 that ensures the Department of Mechanical Engineering will continue to reward junior faculty for outstanding efforts. Jones, a member of department's advisory board since 1998, worked with Ken Ball, the department head, to identify how his gift could provide the maximum benefit for the department.

Recipients of the Jones Fellow of Mechanical Engineering will be eligible to receive supplemental funding for a period of up to five years. The department head will make the selection, following recommendations from the Mechanical Engineering Honorifics Committee.

"I like the idea of helping junior faculty through these fellowships. I think I can make a bigger impact with this type of gift and help the department more," Jones said.

"All of our existing endowed positions are professorships, which are reserved exclusively for full professors," said Ball. "John Jones' generous gift will allow us to recognize outstanding mid-career faculty, who are often recruited aggressively by other universities who can offer endowed fellowships to them. Now, we are in a position to preempt this loss of talent and the Jones Fellowships will definitely help us to retain our rising faculty stars."

Since 1995, Jones, a retired American Electric Power (AEP) executive has also funded an endowed scholarship for ME students.

Jones truly understands how a scholarship or a supplemental award can make a significant difference in someone's career. The grandson of an Italian immigrant who settled in St. Paul, Va., Jones saw hard times first hand as he grew up in this southwestern Virginia mining town in the 1940s and '50s. Today, Jones remains well acquainted with this rural area and visits often -- his 86-year old father was the well-respected tire dealer of this community of 979 until his death in the fall of 2005.

As a youngster, Jones viewed the size of St. Paul to be an advantage. "Everyone knew who you were in St. Paul. They knew your family. And they would be supportive for the most part...and there would always be someone to pick you up and spur you on to do more.

Jones, one of 29 to graduate from St. Paul High School, began his four-decade plus relationship with Virginia Tech in 1961. He arrived in Blacksburg with a high school record of almost straight "A"s. The fact that he had suffered a mild case of polio as a youngster prevented him from being in the Corps of Cadets. He co-oped from 1962 to 1964, working with the Arnold Engineering Development Center testing rocket and jet engines.

After he received his diploma in 1967, he spent the next two and a half years at AEP's Clinch River Power Plant in Virginia. Slightly bored, the young country boy decided it was time to do something different, and he opted to apply for a new job within the company. With this promotion, he was off to the Big Apple.

From then on, Jones' career was a whirlwind. He never stayed in one location for more than five years, and never longer than two years in the same job, until he made his last move that based him at the AEP headquarters in Columbus, Ohio. "I was never bored, and always presented with new challenges. AEP kept coming up with these new challenges, and I just kept gearing up for the next one," the hard-driver says.

In his 20s, Jones was directing the construction of some of the largest power plants on the planet. In fact, of the nine 1300-megawatt coal-fired units in the world, Jones was involved in building seven of them. He also was in charge of converting a nuclear plant to coal, the first and only time this has been accomplished. When asked why this has never been done since, he responds simply, "No guts."

In 1993, when the company asked him to take over its fossil and hydro generating operations, he recalls he "could have been knocked over with a feather." As senior vice president for fossil and hydro operations, he started to emphasize team-based approaches to management. "People were doing great things at AEP but in isolation. All of my facilities were like islands. So, we put teams together...teams to suggest policy and direction and to learn from each other. No one else in the utility business was utilizing the team-based approach to operations and maintenance we were using," Jones says.

In 1998, Jones became a senior vice president in charge of generation projects. He directed leading edge environmental projects such as flue gas scrubbers (FGD), selective catalytic reduction (SCR) and other measures to remove nitrous oxides plus pursuing innovative new generation alternatives. "We did this work in anticipation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) changing its rules," Jones explains. "With spiraling natural gas prices, and the country's reluctance to move towards nuclear power, we must find cleaner ways to burn coal, our most abundant energy source. "

In 2000, AEP named Jones president of a wholly owned subsidiary of the company, Pro Serv, Inc., an organization of some 1400 professionals responsible for the engineering design, construction and maintenance of AEP's in-house fleet of power plants and to market those services to others in the power industry. "At the time, we had more than 80 coal, natural gas, nuclear, hydroelectric and wind power plants," Jones explains. "And our purpose was to hone our competitive edge by being successful in the open market."

When Jones retired from AEP at the end of 2002 after a 36-year career with the utility company, Pro Serv had become the ninth largest power contractor in the country, increasing in revenues from \$150 million to \$800 million in the 30-month period. Since his retirement, he has remained active by consulting to the power industry.

His penchant for success is part of what he believes he can continue to impart to the Mechanical Engineering Department as a member of its advisory board. "We add a business perspective to the educational process. We have questioned hard the University's commitment to its facilities and faculty. We have questioned the long-term strategic plans, and we look to see how we can encourage more participation by our distinguished alumni."

Ball adds, "John is a valued member of our advisory board, and we are grateful for his continuing involvement with Virginia Tech. He is passionate in his support of the ME Department and the College of Engineering. In establishing the John R. Jones III Faculty Fellowship endowment, he is making a significant investment in our future. With a number of young stars on our faculty, his gift will have an immediate impact, and we will continue to benefit from his generosity for many years to come. I am extremely excited by John's gift, and can't wait to name the first Jones Fellow."

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