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Think Globally, Act Locally: TECO Supports Engineering Students

While low numbers are great when discussing the price of gasoline, when you're talking about how many engineers are expected to graduate from college each year, more is definitely better. Despite the number of really good engineering programs in the United States, we don't graduate nearly as many engineers as you'd think. In 2005, approximately 500,000 engineers graduated in China, 200,000 in India, and in the United States and Canada only 70,000 engineers graduated. Because engineering students will be responsible for building our constructed world in the coming years, it benefits us all to help keep students in engineering school and attract more people into the discipline. Yet it is sometimes difficult to know how to help.

TECO of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, has found a way, by donating books for one of the most popular elective engineering classes at Oregon State University (OSU) in Corvallis. The course, *Wood Design*, is about the use of wood in structures. The books are not a typical textbook but the four-volume "Wood Design Package" from the AF&PA American Wood Council that include the National Design Specification[®] for Wood Construction (NDS[®]). TECO sent enough for all the students in OSU's *Wood Design* winter class, as it has done in the past for OSU and for similar classes at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

"I wondered, can any one person or even one company really have a significant impact on an issue of such massive scale?" asked Steve Winistorfer, P.E., president of TECO. "But then I thought about the slogan used to encourage people to recycle: *think globally, act locally*. It reminds us that only through the collective participation and actions of individuals can the long-term goal of the whole be met." Winistorfer decided the best way to help would be for TECO to donate necessary materials to students enrolled in wood design classes.

Looking at all those tall glass and steel buildings currently scraping the sky, one might wonder if it's really that important that our future engineers understand how to build with wood.

"Since about 90% of all structures in the United States are wood frame structures, it is critical that all graduating civil engineers have some exposure to wood engineering," said Rakesh Gupta, Ph.D., instructor of the *Wood Design* course at OSU. "TECO's generous support will help ensure that well-qualified civil engineers have that exposure."

Winistorfer strongly believes that forest product corporations have to look at the voids in these scholastic programs and make every effort to fill them. "There are many ways to make a difference in the life of a program or even one student," said Winistorfer. "It could be through providing internships to wood science, wood engineering, or forestry students. It could be through sponsoring a student's participation in an industry meeting, or it could be by what we've done at TECO, by donating textbooks to universities that teach wood science and forestry."

TECO is North America's private and independent third-party certification agency for engineered wood products, with its corporate office in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, and laboratories in Oregon and Louisiana.

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