December 1998

Department of Chemical Engineering Graduates
Michigan State University

Dear Friends of the Department,

Well, we did it again… we finished in the top ten nationally!  (No, not the football team, sorry.)
Your very own Department of Chemical Engineering placed eighth in total research compared
with all other such departments in the country (see C&E News, Oct. 19, 1998, pg. 73).
Per faculty member, we are among the top three nationally in research volume and are the undisputed
Big Ten champions.  (Does this mean a trip to the Rose Bowl?  I’ll have to ask our
administration.)  And once again a certain chemical engineering department in Ann Arbor (not to
name names) didn’t make the top 25.  They are good down there, just not as good as we are.

In mid-October we held our very first Alumni Dinner for graduates of this department.  Almost
100 former students, faculty, staff and friends gathered to renew acquaintances and to celebrate
the accomplishments of the department.  It was a very successful and enjoyable event.  We will
hold a similar gathering in Houston later this month.  If you are interested in hosting or attending
a similar event in your own area, please let me know.  We will try to put one together.

During our Alumni Dinner, I had the privilege of awarding to our faculty certificates of patents
they received during 1996-97.  Overall, our department earned 7 of the 44 patents awarded to all
University faculty members.  Since there are 14 faculty in the department and approximately
2600 faculty across the University, that means that one half of one percent of the faculty in the
University (that’s us) earned sixteen percent of all the patents.  In the College of Engineering
where we are less than 10% of all faculty members, we earned thirty nine percent of all patents.

Consider also the Withrow Teacher Scholar Award, a very competitive University-wide award
for excellence in both teaching and research.  Between 1985 and 1995, chemical engineering
faculty won five Teacher Scholar Awards while faculty from all the other departments on campus
won the award 61 times.  Therefore roughly 2% of the faculty across the University earned the
award during that period, while 36% of the chemical engineering faculty won the award.  And
although we are only 9% of the faculty in the College of Engineering, we won 63% of the
Teacher Scholar Awards given to engineering faculty during this time.  Now, if all of the
University faculty were chemical engineers like our folks, wouldn’t that be something!  (Yes, you
are right.  I am very proud of my colleagues on this faculty.)

I could fill up pages bragging about individual members of the faculty.  Just let me cameo the
accomplishments of two of them.  I hope to tell you later more about what the others are doing.
Dr. Ramani Narayan was recently awarded the William N. Findley award “for significant
contributions to the application of new technologies…” by the American Society for Testing and
Materials (ASTM).  He had earlier won the “Outstanding Achievement Award” from ASTM.
Ramani is a leader in the worldwide effort to develop biodegradable plastics and standards for them. He is also probably the most accomplished entrepreneur on our faculty. Ramani has been responsible for launching four new companies. It is appropriate that he has created and will teach next fall a new course entitled “Engineering Entrepreneurship.” No ivory tower for Ramani, he has been there and done that, again and again.

Dr. Bob Ofoli, another outstanding faculty member, was recently featured in *Currents*, the annual publication of the College of Engineering (see enclosed article). Bob is a leader in the effort to apply chemical engineering principles to food systems. Every year a number of our students go to work in the large, diverse food industry. In an effort to better serve these individuals, Bob recently developed an option sequence in food process engineering for our undergraduate students. Students who complete this option will take the standard undergraduate chemical engineering curriculum but they will also take a series of focused electives in microbiology, food chemistry and food laws and regulations. We believe that students who complete this option will be well prepared both to enter and to rise rapidly in the food industry. Thanks, Bob, for taking the initiative to improve professional opportunities for our students.

Bob was also recognized at the Alumni Dinner as the first recipient of income from the Michael and Barbara Dennos Endowed Discretionary Fund. Bob will use a year’s income from this perpetual endowment to partially support a graduate student who will study the interaction of two milk proteins at the oil-water interface. Our thanks to Mike and Barbara for their generous support… and to many of you also for your financial support over the years.

Unfortunately, alumni support is one area where U. Michigan beats us—over 50% of their alumni support their school, whereas less than 10% of Spartans do so. If you would like to include the department (Go State, beat Michigan!) in your charitable giving, you can contact either me or Mr. Mark Brower (517-355-8339) for annual giving or estate gifts, if you are doing estate planning. There are favorable tax consequences for giving to higher education (see enclosed sheet for Michigan residents). Our goal is 100% participation by our alumni… just as 100% of our faculty are donating to a departmental scholarship fund, even if they can only afford a few dollars a month. So if the telemarketing students call you or you receive a promotional mailer, please consider designating a gift to the Department of Chemical Engineering.

I can promise you that your gifts will be used to maintain and enhance excellence in this department. You can be proud of the achievements of these folks. An investment in them is truly an investment in excellence.

Sincerely yours,

Bruce E. Dale
Professor and Chair

M. Brower, enclosures