

For Immediate Release
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Ferris dedicates Fenn Digital Photogrammetry and GIS Lab

BIG RAPIDS – A leading surveying professional’s respect for the Ferris State University Surveying Engineering program has resulted in a new state-of-the-art academic laboratory.

Dedication ceremonies were held recently for the John R. and Lynda D. Fenn Digital Photogrammetry and GIS Endowed Laboratory in the University’s Swan Technical Arts Building.

The lab is equipped with 15 stations designed exclusively to serve the needs of students in digital photogrammetry and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), according to Sayed Hashimi, department chair and professor of surveying engineering. “Each station is loaded with the state-of-the-art Leica Photogrammetry Suite and Leica High Definition Surveying systems, all courtesy of Leica Geosystems, and ESRI’s ArcGIS 9.0 software.

“These truly revolutionary technologies in our classrooms will give our students a very distinctive advantage,” said Hashimi. “This lab is the only one of its kind at the University, and it will touch the lives of all those who choose surveying engineering as a career path for as long as this institution exists.”

The Fenns are neither Ferris alumni nor typical donors to the University. John is president of Fenn and Associates Surveying, Inc., in Shelby Township, a firm he founded in 1978 that now employs 45 persons. He was named Surveyor of the Year in 1998 by the Michigan Society of Professional Surveyors (MSPS) and in 2003 served as president of the National Society of Professional Surveyors.

He and his wife, Lynda, who live in Sterling Heights, became aware of Ferris and its surveying program after he was invited to join the program’s advisory board by Hashimi. Shortly thereafter, his firm established \$1,500 a year scholarship to support the program. That all changed when Lynda attended an MSPS meeting.

“My wife came with me to the state meeting and was talking with Dr. (Khagendra) Thapa (professor of surveying engineering), who mentioned that the company had been giving scholarships,” recalled John. “Lynda asked how much, and he told her \$1,500. She turned to me and said, ‘Kinda cheap, aren’t ya?’”

John quickly increased his scholarship gift to \$2,500, and Lynda took a more active role by supporting an annual student auction fundraiser to the tune of thousands of dollars each year. And recipients worked for Fenn and Associates for a day.

As the relationship blossomed, the Fenns wanted to do more. They approached Hashimi with the idea of endowing a scholarship. He thanked them, then suggested they consider endowing a laboratory instead, creating a source of funds to keep the facility supplied with the latest surveying equipment and technology.

“It’s a way to touch all the students in the program, because every surveying student will pass through that lab and benefit from it,” said John. “Our support of students comes through a love of the profession. I don’t believe there’s a school in the nation that can surpass Ferris in teaching surveying.”



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During the dedication ceremony, Fenn challenged industry professionals to contribute to the program, stating that he would match the gifts up to \$10,000 for the next year.

Further information or gift forms for the John R. and Lynda D. Fenn Digital Photogrammetry and GIS Laboratory Endowment Fund are available by contacting Debra Jacks, director of planned giving, at 231-591-3817 or jacksd@ferris.edu. Details about establishing scholarships or endowments may be obtained from the Advancement Office at 231-591-2391.

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FENN LABORATORY DEDICATED – Ferris State University President David Eisler (left) presents a Presidents Club plaque to Lynda and John Fenn following the recent dedication of the Fenn Digital Photogrammetry and GIS Endowed Laboratory in the College of Technology. The new state-of-the-art lab will benefit all Ferris surveying engineering students far into the future.

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