



**WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY**

Paper Technology  
Foundation

**66<sup>th</sup>**

# **Annual Report**

**Western Michigan University**

**Kalamazoo, MI | June 30, 2025**



## ***2025 By the Numbers***

**12**

Events Hosted

**35**

Member Companies

**132**

Students

**\$2.8M**

In Research Funding

**\$370K**

In Scholarships  
Awarded

**27**

Guest Speakers

# ***Foundation*** Report

As 2025 draws to a close, we have much to celebrate. Program enrollment has reached 132 students, exceeding our five-year goal of 120. We were also pleased to welcome three new corporate members this year: Andritz, APS Grupa, and Omya. This year marked the development of our new strategic plan through 2030, establishing a clear path for continued growth and impact. Our next enrollment milestone is 135 students, positioning us to graduate 20–30 students annually to meet the industry’s increasing demand for skilled professionals.

We are also deepening our investment in student leadership development by formally supporting Ts’ai Lun, WMU’s Student TAPPI chapter. This organization continues to play an essential role in preparing students for success through mentorship, networking, and professional engagement.

Our collaboration with the University remains strong, particularly in curriculum development, guest lectures, and senior design sponsorships—all of which ensure that students graduate with both technical expertise and real-world experience.

Finally, we have set an ambitious goal to grow our scholarship endowment by \$3 million. Reaching this target will enable us to provide \$10,000 in annual scholarships per student at our projected enrollment of 135. This level of support is critical to attracting talented students and ensuring their success—a commitment that has long defined our community. To our alumni, trustees, and industry partners—thank you. Your continued generosity of time, expertise, and resources directly shapes the future of our program and the strength of our industry.

**Tom David, PTF President & Governance Committee Chair**

# The *Team*



Jen Johnson  
Board Liaison



Cindy Gleaton  
Recruiter



Alyssa McCurren  
Marketing Specialist

## How to *Get Involved*

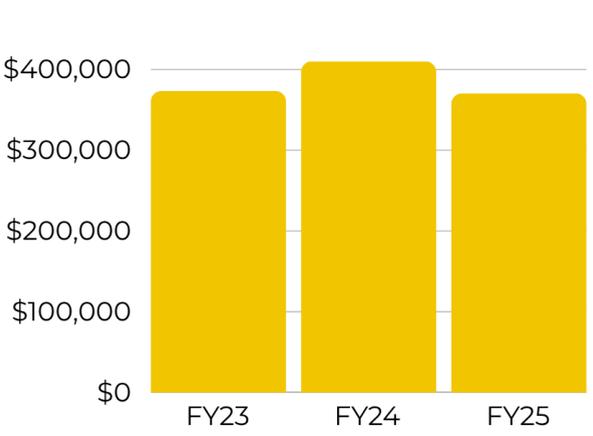


Alumni support plays a crucial role in the growth and development of WMU paper students. There are a number of ways to get involved with WMU Paper, yet one of the most effective is through financial contributions. Our goal at the PTF is to increase our endowment total by \$3 million to sustainably support student scholarships. To learn more about how you can get involved, please contact Julie Loncharte, Chief Development Officer for the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences.

Julie Loncharte  
Chief Development Officer  
[julie.a.loncharte@wmich.edu](mailto:julie.a.loncharte@wmich.edu)

# Scholarship & Net Assets Records

Total Scholarships Awarded



Total Net Assets



scan for full report



# ***New Freshmen & Transfers***

## **Majoring in Paper Engineering**

**Cayden Barbour** | Southfield, MI

**Deven Berner** | Three Rivers, MI

**Colin Bransch** | South Lyon, MI

**Evie Culver** | Frankenmuth, MI

**Luke Davis** | Waterford, MI

**Ava Dignan** | Shelby Township, MI

**Gus Dobberstein** | Dundee, MI

**Alex Girardi** | Shelby Township, MI

**Scarlett Hindbaugh** | Portage, MI

**Jocelyn Jaros** | Oswego, IL

**Lauren Jensen** | Royal Oak, MI

**Jenna Keller** | Rockford, MI

**Dalton Kimball** | Grand Rapids, MI

**Callie LaPorte** | Kalamazoo, MI

**Avery Lehman** | Midland, MI

**Jace Montgomery** | Lansing, MI

**Cadence O'Dell** | Reese, MI

**Aidan Petersen** | Plainfield, IL

**Jadyn Pittman** | Detroit, MI

**Elah Psychogios** | Des Plaines, IL

**Carter Ray** | Lowell, MI

**Wake Sandborn** | Middleville, MI

**Dylan Schott** | Clinton Township, MI

**Matthew Smith** | Canton, MI

**Treyden Stitcher** | Colorado Springs, CO

**Carter Swanson** | Canton, MI

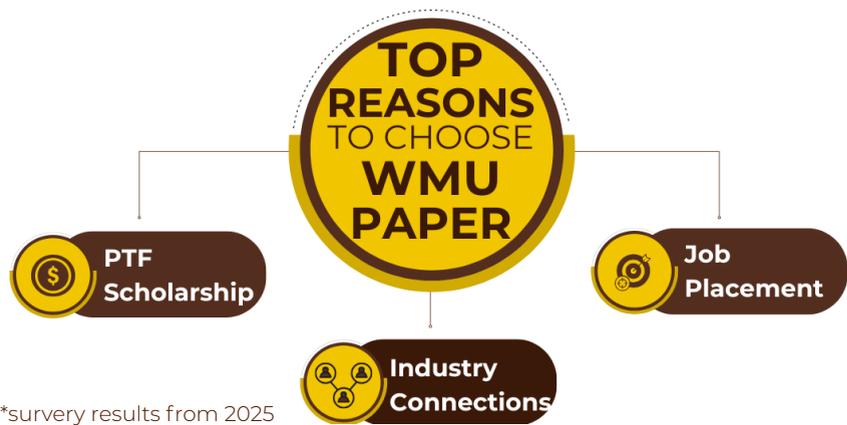
**Alyssa Townsend** | Ann Arbor, MI

**Adin Young** | Plainwell, MI

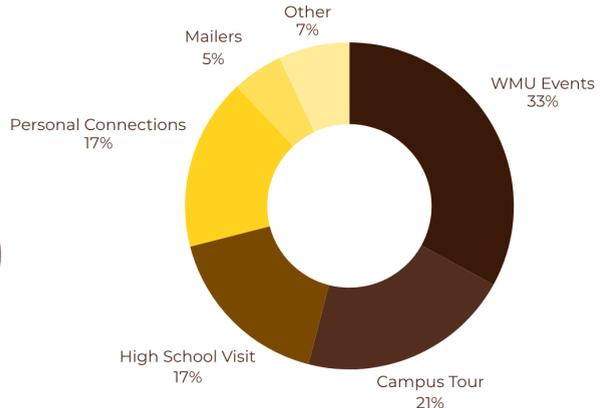
***“The Paper Technology Foundation’s industry connections opened doors I never would’ve found on my own. Their support helped me land an internship with Sonoco and explore which part of the paper industry I’m most passionate about.”*** - ***Carolyn Kolassa*** | Junior

# Recruiter Report

The Paper Engineering program enrolled 28 new students for Fall 2025. The incoming class is academically strong with 57% of admitted students achieving GPAs above 3.85. More than half of the students (57%) are double majors in Paper and Chemical Engineering, and 4% are transfers. In response to new recruiting challenges, the PTF continued with a proactive approach, increasing high school presentations by 150%, expanding the reach of the Paper Engineering mailer, and personalized outreach to high-performing and admitted students in related majors. The team will continue strategic high school and campus visits, focusing on regions that yield strong student interest. Efforts will expand through industry partnerships that bring real-world perspectives into classrooms and campus events, and through new collaborations with community colleges to strengthen transfer pathways. Recruitment communications will be enhanced with refreshed mailers, digital outreach, and a clear focus on the return on investment, ensuring that every student sees the powerful opportunities a Paper Engineering degree from WMU can provide.



How did you first hear about WMU Paper?



\*survey results from 2025



***“The highlight of the fall field trip was seeing how a paper mill operates on a daily basis. The plants we visited (Packaging Corporation of America and Graphic Packaging International) confirmed my interest in this career field, and the size of the paper machine and pulper made me excited to learn when I get back to WMU.”***

***- Gus Dobberstein | Freshman***

# Board Liaison Report

As soon as students arrive on campus, the PTF focuses on retention through internship and co-op placements as well as building relationships and fostering community within the student body. Resume workshops, interview practice, and industry exposure prepare students for Fall Hiring Week and successful offers. These career prep and student engagement activities connect students with the Paper community, PTF corporate members, and industry opportunities. Many students secure placement within the first semester, strengthening their foundation in the Paper Program and driving student success and retention.

**Week 1**

- Sign up for the fall field trip and alumni dinner
- Meet your upperclassmen mentor

**Week 2**

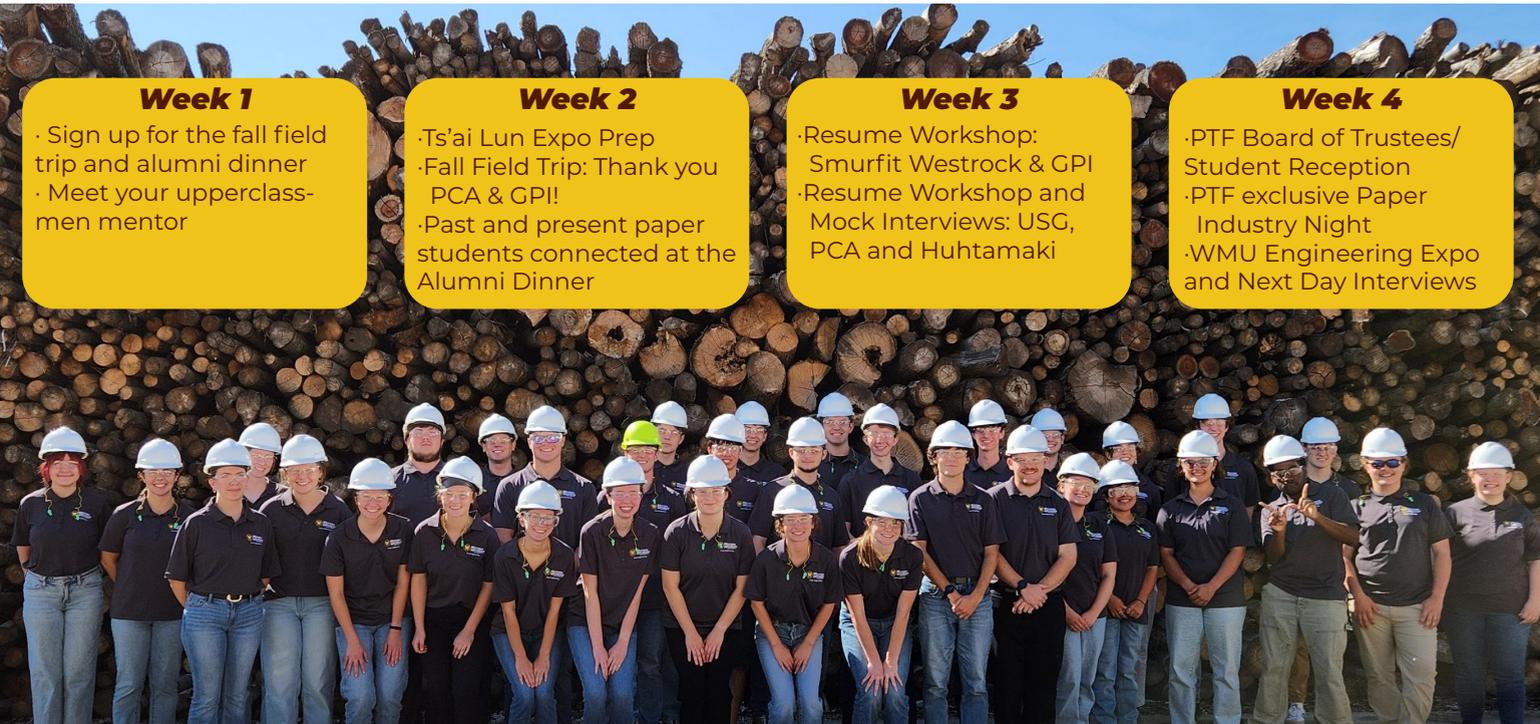
- Ts'ai Lun Expo Prep
- Fall Field Trip: Thank you PCA & GPI!
- Past and present paper students connected at the Alumni Dinner

**Week 3**

- Resume Workshop: Smurfit Westrock & GPI
- Resume Workshop and Mock Interviews: USG, PCA and Huhtamaki

**Week 4**

- PTF Board of Trustees/ Student Reception
- PTF exclusive Paper Industry Night
- WMU Engineering Expo and Next Day Interviews





# **Graduate** Placement

## **Spring 2025:**

**Tyler Coyne** | USG in Otsego, MI

**Elisha Ewing** | Smurfit Westrock in Cottonton, AL

**Sheila Gubachy** | Domtar in Plymouth, NC

**Alex Hamann** | Nalco Water—An Ecolab Company in Central United States

**Carter Hoard** | Solenis in Kalamazoo, MI

**Parker Langellier** | USG in Otsego, MI

**Emma Perrin** | Domtar in Hawesville, KY

**Austin VanderWeg** | Smurfit Westrock in West Point, VA

## **Fall 2025:**

**Mitch Allison** | Continuing with USG in Otsego, MI

**Noah Reifert** | Domtar in Plymouth, NC

# **TAPPI Ts'ai Lun** Report

It's been an exciting and productive time for Ts'ai Lun! The relaunched Mentorship Program paired 28 first-year students with upperclassmen mentors, and the first Ts'ai Lun meeting welcomed 137 members. Students attended Engineering Expo prep sessions with industry professionals Tom David and Jen Johnson, who shared valuable career insights. In addition, an Essity Employer Night, an Alumni Talk featuring Brian Risinger, a Financial Literacy Workshop, and some fun winter activities are scheduled before finals.

Each year, fundraising is a key element to the success of Ts'ai Lun. The annual Golf Outing at Angel's Crossing brought together 90 players and raised \$7,500. This fundraising effort was supported by Volleyball Clean Ups, Roosevelt Company training, and merch sales. To date, Ts'ai Lun has raised \$17,000 to send students to the 2026 TAPPI Student Summit in Birmingham, Alabama!

***“The PTF’s mentorship and resume workshops helped me feel confident going into Hiring Week. Through those connections, I learned more about the industry and even secured a co-op for next fall.”***

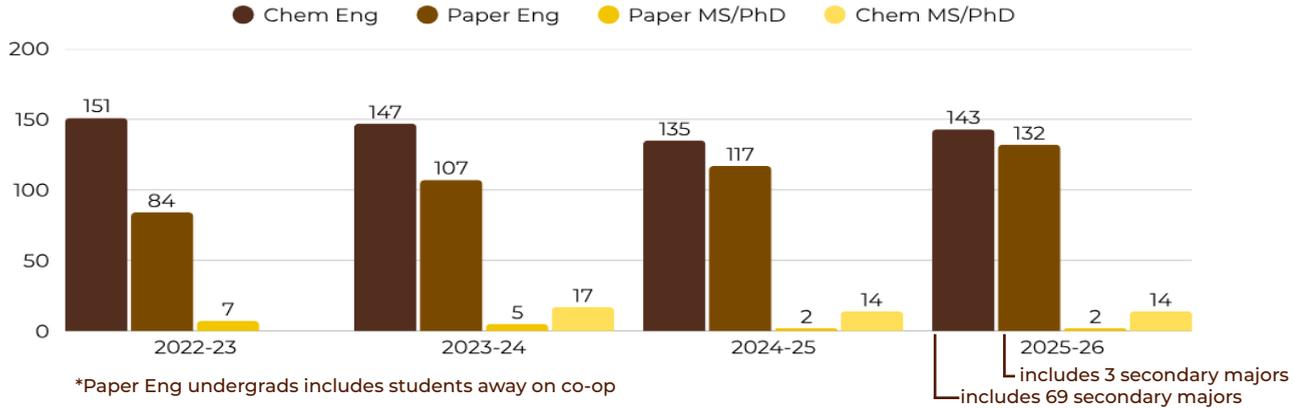
***- Evie Culver | Freshman***



***“One of the most unique aspects of the Paper Program is the opportunity to gain hands-on experience from the start. During my internship, I had the incredible opportunity to meet inspiring professionals and apply the knowledge I gained in the classroom to real-world projects.”***

**- Marty Barker | Junior**

# Department Enrollment



# Foundation Organization

## Officers

<b>President</b> Tom David '00	<b>President-Elect</b> Mark Zempel '92	<b>Vice-Presidents</b> Jen Lechlitner '97 Eric Bock '13 Leslie McLain	<b>Treasurer</b> Jan Van Der Kley '80	<b>Assistant Treasurer</b> Colleen Scarff
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## Corporate Benefactors



## Corporate Members



Huhtamaki

Kemira

Kimberly-Clark



NSK



PRATT INDUSTRIES

Primient

PRO  
PROJECTS / MAINTENANCE / WORKFORCE

sappi



TRINSEO



Valmet  
FORWARD

VOITH

### Corporate Contributors

KADANT



### Individual Benefactor, Patron, and Life Members

An Individual Benefactor is any individual who establishes a Named Endowment Fund and who contributes the prescribed annual dues of \$1,000 or more. An Individual Patron is any individual who contributes the prescribed annual dues of \$1,000 or more but has not established a Named Endowment Fund. An Individual Life Member is any individual who has received the Hall of Fame Award. All have voting rights at the Annual Meeting. For a complete list of benefactors, patrons and life members, contact the PTF.

# **Committee** Reports

## **Alumni Engagement**



Jen Lechlitner  
Committee Chair

The Alumni Engagement Committee focused on strengthening relationships among WMU paper alumni, students, and industry partners throughout 2025.

In April, more than 50 alumni gathered for a successful networking event that celebrated the strength of our community. In September, 38 paper students joined alumni in Manistee, Michigan, during their field trip for an engaging dinner event that fostered meaningful connections between students and professionals. The annual Paper Tailgate on October 11 was another highlight, bringing alumni together to enjoy food, camaraderie, and a big WMU win over Ball State. All event updates are shared via LinkedIn and email; alumni are encouraged to follow the WMU Paper Technology Foundation page to stay connected. Looking ahead, the committee aims to expand engagement opportunities through career panels and mentoring initiatives within the WMU paper alumni network.

## **Follow us on social media**

And stay up to date on everything happening at the PTF!

**LinkedIn**



**Tik Tok**



**Instagram**



## Recruitment and Scholarship



Calvin Bemby  
Committee Chair

The Recruitment and Scholarship Committee continues to advance initiatives that strengthen student recruitment and engagement within the Paper Engineering program. In response to increasing external recruiting challenges, a strategic plan has been developed to establish additional connections with prospective students through outreach to community colleges, high schools and science clubs, and inbound WMU tours and events. The committee continues to partner with Cindy Gleaton to further promote WMU's Paper Engineering program. Scholarship support also remains a central focus, as the committee works to secure additional funding that will help sustain and develop the next generation of paper engineers.

## Education and Research



Mike Farrell  
Committee Chair

Thanks to the efforts of the Education and Research Committee, the NSF IUCRC Center for Plastic, Paper, and Hybrid Packaging End-of-Life Solutions officially launched in July at Michigan State University, with 10 PTF member companies joining the Center. WMU plays an active role in advancing research through this collaboration, including the recent selection of a PFAS-free coating for molded fiber products developed at WMU for further advancement. In academic initiatives, PAPER 2420 Coatings will be offered in Spring 2026. The course will be instructed by guest lectures with extensive industry experience, providing students with valuable real-world perspectives. The committee also continues to make progress on Senior Design Projects.

A total of 13 projects are needed for the upcoming cycle, with nine confirmed to date with sponsorship from Axchem USA, PCA, Graphic Packaging, PaperWorks, APS Grupa, Nalco Water - An Ecolab Company, and USG. Efforts are ongoing to secure the remaining projects.



## **PTF Awards**

**Hall of Fame:** Steve Myers

**Outstanding Senior:** Elisha Ewing

**Honor:** Brian Pahl

**Student Appreciation:** Tom David

## **CEAS Awards**

**Alumni Excellence:** Tom David



***“I loved all the travel I got to do during my internship—I was able to visit different mills and plants, from linerboard to molded fiber. Solenis also had amazing intern resources! Each week, an industry professional led a workshop that helped me learn not just about the paper industry, but also about networking and building my resume.”***

***- Tabitha Newberry | Junior***





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