

1998 Engineer of Distinction



Harvill C. Eaton

B.S. Engineering Science, TTU, 1970

M.S. Engineering Science, TTU, 1972

Ph.D. Materials Science, Vanderbilt University, 1976

Vice President for Research and Professor of Materials Engineering

Drexel University

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Citation

Harvill C. Eaton is Vice President for Research and Professor of Materials Engineering at Drexel University in Philadelphia. He is a native of Nashville, Tennessee, and received BS and MS degrees in engineering science from Tennessee Technological University, and his PhD in materials science from Vanderbilt University.

Dr. Eaton began his career as an assistant professor at Louisiana State University in 1976, and was promoted to professor of mechanical engineering in 1988. As a faculty member, he published more than 40 papers in refereed journals, and has received more than \$1.5 million in funding for his research in materials science and environmental engineering. He was a member of the faculty in engineering science and mechanics at Tennessee Tech from 1978 to 1980.

His career in academic administration began in 1986 when he was appointed Associate Dean of Engineering at LSU. He served on a legislative committee to revise the formula for funding Louisiana's public colleges and universities and was involved in two large funding initiatives for the university. In December 1990, he was appointed Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development. At LSU, Dr. Eaton had line responsibility for 25 research centers and three graduate academic programs.

Dr. Eaton spearheaded the effort which brought a supercomputer to LSU in 1987, and worked with the university administration and the federal legislature to establish the Center for Advanced Microstructures and Devices, a synchrotron radiation laboratory specializing in the research and production of micromechanical devices. In 1993, LSU established the Center for Coastal, Energy and Environment Resources and the Coastal Marine Institute.

In 1989, Dr. Eaton secured a donation of 15 acres of land to locate the Center for Advanced Microstructures and Devices off-campus and begin a research park. He worked with local business and Baton Rouge legislators to pass legislation forming the Louisiana Research Park Corporation. Dr. Eaton served as a member and officer of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the Park Corporation.

During his tenure at LSU, the Community-University Partnership (CUP) was created for the purpose of fostering self-help and social change for the residents of an economically depressed area north of the campus. The project attracted federal, state, and private funding.

He established the Washington, D.C., office of LSU to assist in obtaining grants for these and other faculty projects. In total, over \$60 million in large grant funding was obtained through the office.

Vice President Eaton is active in national higher education, science and technology societies. He serves on numerous boards and advisory councils, including two start-up technology firms in Philadelphia. He joined Drexel University in September 1997.

As Vice President for Research and Professor of Materials Engineering at Drexel University, Dr. Eaton is concerned with making the university more responsive to the radical changes taking place in society and government. University administrators cannot ignore the cost of higher education. Financial and programmatic accountability has become very important to higher education, whether it is in research, service or academics. Public and private universities alike must examine why they do things the way they do and weigh the answers against the costs.

According to Dr. Eaton, every university must begin to look at quality, accountability and responsiveness to the customer. The mission of any university is service—service through teaching and research. The quality of the classroom must be the highest because the customer, the student, deserves it. The research and outreach must be cost effective and nationally competitive. When effective they mean better experiences for the students, a quality faculty, and economic development of the community and region. The university that meets the challenge of customer-oriented service will be the university that excels in the 21st century.

His wife, Lois, is a psychiatric social worker from Seattle. She received her BS from Tennessee Tech and her MS from Louisiana State University. They have two children, Christopher and Mary Elizabeth.



Harvill Eaton receives his award from Dr. Ray Kinslow