

Collins Honored with Alumni Merit Award

John W. Collins III, former Alcoa executive vice president, Science and Technology, has been named the recipient of the 2003 Alumni Society Merit Award for the Department of Mechanical Engineering. This award, established in 1992, is presented annually to recognize an alumnus whose achievements have been extraordinary in his field of specialization and who has brought distinction to himself and the College.

Collins' most recent position at Alcoa, which he assumed in 2001, showcased the exceptional achievement that earned him the award. In that role, he led Alcoa's corporate technology programs, strategic product and process developments as well as breakthrough technology projects. He is also a member of Alcoa's Executive Council, the senior leadership group that provides strategic direction for the company. Earlier this year, he was named the Chairman's Counsel.

"I feel truly honored by this recognition," Collins said. "In many respects I been associated with Michigan all of my life. My mother and father graduated from the University of Michigan, as did my sister and a number of my aunts, uncles and cousins. I guess I'd call myself a U-M family brat," he added with a chuckle. "In one of our first family photos, I was sporting a maize and blue U-M sweater."

The family tradition of attending Michigan is mirrored by a family tradition of working for Alcoa. Collins' father was also an Alcoa officer, and not so coincidentally, was a long time member of the CoE Industry Advisory Board and the Alcoa ambassador to U-M, a role also filled by Collins since the early 1990's.

"Alcoa has close ties with U-M, and I'm pleased to be part of that. When my father worked with the college, he said it was very

important to help develop the next generation of leaders for our company, and I saw that as my responsibility as well. The college is uncommonly responsive to input from industry. The CoE has consistently turned out excellent graduates who are solidly grounded in scientific first principles and engineering concepts. This insures a life long ability to solve complex problems with a proper blend of know-how and know why. This was the approach I was taught, and it has helped me at every stage of my career."

Collins noted that one of his proudest achievements was being elected a corporate officer of Alcoa in 1995. Unlike a promotion, it's an honor reserved for those who have made a significant contribution to the company. He placed receiving the Alumni Society Merit Award a close second. "When I received word that I was to receive this award, I felt the same thrill as I did at Alcoa. It's an honor to have one's work recognized," he said.

Collins joined Alcoa in 1969 at the Alcoa Technical Center near Pittsburgh. His first position was as a development engineer in product and process development; he later became section head of engineering and equipment there. From 1978 through 1986 he held a series of sales and marketing assignments. Since that time, Collins has been president of a number of Alcoa's major business units, including Engineered Products and Mill Products.

In addition to being a member of the ME External Advisory Board since 2001, Collins is a member of the advisory board for the Tauber Manufacturing Institute at the University of Michigan, as well as several other commercial and academic industry advisory boards. He currently holds five U.S. patents and is the recipient of three Alcoa



John W. Collins III

Technical Awards. Collins received a BS ME in 1969 from the University of Michigan. Collins plans to retire next January. He and his wife, Karen, reside in Austin, Texas, and have three children, daughters Paige and Lanie, and a son, John W. Collins IV.

Recipients of the Alumni Society Merit Awards from each academic department are selected by departmental committees, whose members are chosen and headed by the department chair. The list of recent recipients of the ME Alumni Society Award indicates the breadth of interests of ME graduates. A complete list accompanies this story on page 49.