

**Chairperson's Welcome**  
**2002 SPE Automotive Composites Conference**  
**September 12 & 13**  
**Troy, MI**

The Automotive and Composites Divisions of the Society of Plastics Engineers welcome participants to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Automotive Composites Conference. Many exciting new automotive composite applications have come to market within the past few years. A wide range of materials and process technologies have been utilized to commercialize products such as the:

- V70<sup>®</sup> gear box support bracket from Volvo<sup>®</sup>
- A2<sup>®</sup> structural front-end module carrier from Audi<sup>®</sup>
- Silverado<sup>®</sup> pickup truck box from General Motors<sup>®</sup>
- Vanquish<sup>®</sup> side structural frame from Aston Martin<sup>®</sup>
- Thunderbird<sup>®</sup> exterior body panels from Ford Motor Company<sup>®</sup>

These applications came to fruition only through a multidisciplinary, time-consuming effort from material and equipment suppliers, molders and processors, and the OEM engineering community. Looking at these examples, it is obvious that automotive composite materials development is a global endeavor, hence, our "*Global Technologies for Better Vehicles*" theme of this year's conference.

Engineers and business managers in the automotive composites community are well aware of the potential benefits composite materials can bring through reduced weight, improved safety, and parts consolidation. However, many barriers to market entry remain, including improving surface quality, understanding crash energy management, and developing part joining methods. As composites are applied to ever larger, more complex structural parts, expectations in material and process performance are increasing. Part production is becoming more demanding in terms of cost and productivity, and the composites' community faces more competition from alternate materials such as aluminum, steel, and magnesium.

SPE has organized this conference to continue a path of learning for all participants about practical solutions to composite materials development and use. Sessions have been planned on *New Materials & Processes*, *Enabling Technologies*, *Bonding*, *Painting & Decorating*, and *Truck & Transport Applications*. Key new growth areas of *Biocomposites* and *Fuel Cell & Hybrid Powertrain Applications* are also included in the technical program. VIP speakers and a VIP Panel discussion will enumerate both past successes and future directions in automotive composites.

SPE is grateful to all sponsors, exhibitors, and volunteers for providing the tremendous support required to make this conference a success. And SPE and the conference organizing committee thanks you for attending.

Sincerely,

Michael Connolly, Ph. D.  
Chair – 2002 SPE Automotive Composites Conference