



Center for Paper Business and Industry Studies

Newsletter of the Center for Paper Business and Industry Studies

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A Look Back and a Look Ahead

By Patrick McCarthy, Director

One of 25 Centers in the Sloan Foundation Industry Centers Program, the Center for Paper Business and Industry Studies (CPBIS) was formally established in October, 2000 with a three-year Sloan grant. As readers of this newsletter may already know, CPBIS is a multidisciplinary research, education, and community-building effort that includes three working partners: the Georgia Institute of Technology (GT), the Institute of Paper Science and Technology, and companies in, or affiliated with the pulp and paper industry. In 2003, the Foundation approved a second three-year grant that enabled CPBIS to build upon its important, and in some instances, unique achievements. Among the Center's accomplishments during its first three years were the establishment of a multidisciplinary research program focused upon issues and topics of high value to industry, education of MS and PhD students, implementation of on-site and virtual education modules for the industry, and garnering of industry sponsorships, as well as broad-based industry support for the Center's community-building initiatives.

From the beginning, our vision has been to develop a sustainable center having widespread connectivity with both the academic and industrial communities. The Center's primary foci during the first and second three-year funding periods were research and connectivity, respectively. Initial efforts focused on getting the Center 'up and running' and establishing a viable research program that engaged faculty in management, the social sciences, and engineering to investigate problems and issues that of importance to the industry. In addition, the Center initiated a series of community-building activities to facilitate academe's interactions with industry.

During the second three-year funding cycle, we developed a more targeted research program that led to a smaller set of projects expected to have greater industry impact. Also, and responding to feedback provided by members of the Center's Industry Advisory Board (IAB) and other industry stakeholders, the Center focused its energies and resources on 'connectivity,' undertaking a series of 'brand awareness,' 'knowledge-transfer' and 'communications-related' activities. There is little doubt that our efforts to develop *and sustain* broad-based industry connectivity have produced significant progress during the past three years. Among the Center's achievements during this time, and key to its sustainability, was the creation and proactive involvement of a Board of Executives (BoE). The Management Team (MT) is working closely with the BoE to ensure that the Center's community-building and connectivity initiatives are well designed and implemented.

During the six years since its establishment, CPBIS has funded 15 projects involving 41 research faculty (with over 85 researchers responding to the Center's RFPs) and 63 students; it sponsored six research conferences and 20 research seminars; it instituted an internship program and a graduate fellows program to attract full-time doctoral students interested in pursuing research of interest to CPBIS. (Since inception, four students have received this fellowship.) CPBIS researchers have made 13 presentations at academic conferences, published one book and 12 papers in peer-reviewed journals and have made 19 presentations at trade conferences. The Center also interfaces with industry via its newly redesigned Web site and its management workshops and distance learning programs. To date, the Center has offered five management workshops and over 50

distance-learning programs. Students have consistently evaluated these offerings as ‘good to excellent.’ Both programs are now jointly offered with the Paper Industry Management Association (PIMA), the industry’s primary management association.

In 2003, IPST was integrated into GT and CPBIS became a stand-alone Center within the GT organizational structure, administratively housed in Ivan Allen College’s School of Economics and physically located in the IPST complex. The Center relies on a “dual leadership” organizational structure. The director has responsibility for all center operations and programs, its direct staff, and for building an academic community to participate in the Center’s activities. The executive director is responsible for external development and ensuring two-way connectivity between the Center and the industry.

During our first six years, we have developed a strong interdisciplinary community of scholars, at Georgia Tech and elsewhere, who understand the industry and who know how to conduct research of relevance to industry. Initially, the Center cast its net widely in hopes of stimulating interest among scholars from an array of disciplines who possessed outstanding skills but may not have previously applied them to paper and forest products. A series of announcements, distributed initially to scholars within Georgia Tech and later circulated more widely through the academic community, solicited research proposals organized around five core themes. With advice from the IAB and other industry stakeholders CPBIS refined each subsequent call, taking into account the success of initial projects and shifting concerns in the industry. This approach elicited significant responses and generated a substantial pool of researchers.

More recently, we have pursued a more targeted strategy. While recruiting some additional researchers, the Center has sought to work through teams anchored by researchers with demonstrated commitments to studying the industry on a sustained basis. Some of the Center’s most productive early researchers moved onto the administrative team, while a few others received additional funding to carry out further studies. In this way, the Center has built a core group of researchers who deeply understand the paper and forest products industries. Anchored in economics, with important links to public policy, management, and engineering, the group interacts regularly through formal and informal channels. CPBIS increasingly possesses the character of what might be called a working group on the industry.

During the next three years the Center will work with the BoE to leverage its current and future research,

education, and community-building programs, ensuring that CPBIS will be in a position to continue its work on a self-sustaining basis in 2010 and beyond. To this end, we have produced a series of documents that highlight our research and educational programs, short- and long-term funding plans, and communications plan. CPBIS management and the BoE will use these documents to heighten industry recognition of the value of our research and other programs, thereby generating increased industry interest and support.

Over the past several months CPBIS has worked closely with industry representatives to outline a new research program that will capitalize on the Center’s infrastructure and benefit from the lessons learned. This approach will involve closer brokering in advance between researchers and industry to ensure access for observation-based study and to provide more meaningful results.

In consultation with the BoE, the Center has identified a set of potential research topics, which fall under two general rubrics, Strategic Management and Global Trade and Governance. Identified topics for Strategic Management include: Changing Market Structure and Industry Capacity Dynamics; Social Implications of Capacity Removal; North American Workforce; Private Equity and Corporate Governance; and U.S. Energy Policy Forecast and Implications. Potential Global Governance topics of importance to the industry are: Global Competition Policies; Global Environmental Governance; Economic Institutions in China; and Natural Resources and China. Depending on the level of financial resources made available to CPBIS by its sponsors and partners, we will prioritize and select projects for funding, considering availability of researchers, industry interest, and willingness of industry partners to facilitate observation-based research.

This list of potential projects is not exhaustive and is open to further elaboration as industry interests evolve. A key feature, however, is that the list marries available expertise with a range of issues currently of interest to industry and the industry studies community.

Upcoming Events

PIMA CPBIS Fall 2006 Webcast Series. Reliability Centered Maintenance. Your site, 11:00 a.m. EST October 18, and continuing at biweekly intervals through November 15.

CPBIS at the TAPPI EPE Conference, Nov. 6, Atlanta Marriott Marquis. ■