

THE CREATION OF THE SCHOOL OF PACKAGING AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Laura Bix, Dr. James Goff, & Dr. Diana Twede, Michigan State University

ABSTRACT

The author Lillian Gilcrest once stated, "The greatest achievements are those that benefit others." Students, industry, and consumers have all derived benefit from the achievements of the Michigan State University's School of Packaging. Among the many achievements surrounding this program is the fact that it was the first to grant college degrees in packaging in the world.

Since the first Packaging degree was awarded in 1955, the School has granted approximately 5300 Bachelor of Science degrees, 700 Master of Science degrees, and its first Doctorate degree in the Spring of 1998. Packaging students, past and present, have had the opportunity to participate in overseas study programs in Sweden, London and Japan. The School has one of the strongest paid internship programs on campus. The vast majority of packaging students graduate with internship experience; the idea of working with industry as a student is not new. It began with the inception of the program in 1952. Employers from around the world seek Michigan State University's Packaging graduates, and it has alumni from at least 20 countries (Peoples July 21, 1997).

This paper attempts to incorporate articles written during the fifties and sixties with oral histories of people involved in the formation of the School in order to preserve the early history of the School of Packaging. A companion paper, written by Dr. Diana Twede, examines the relationship between packaging and marketing and explores fully changes in the curriculum with time.

It is not clear exactly how the idea for a School of Packaging at Michigan State College (MSC) was conceived. But one thing is clear; a series of people, events and ideas set the stage for a revolutionary new approach to thinking about packaging as a formal discipline.