

# AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Feature compiled by Marius Roodt

## Automotive focus group responds to industry's human resources needs

One of the milestones of alliance between the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the University of Pretoria, reported more than a year ago, was the establishment of a competitive manufacturing task team in UP's School of Engineering.

Together with the CSIR, a committee was formed and discussions were held with the Automotive Industry Development Centre (AIDC).

These discussions have now resulted in the launch of an Automotive Focus Group (AFG) to respond to the needs of the automotive industry for knowledge and technology transfer.

The AFG, which is headed by Professor Jasper Steyn, will be able to use the expertise contained in three chairs at the university that are focused on skills development in the automotive manufacturing industry.

These are a Chair in Automotive Manufacturing in the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, held by Professor Johan Strasheim; a Chair in Life Cycle Engineering in the Department of Engineering and Technology Management, held by Alan Brent; and the Sasol Chair in Vehicle Engineering, held by Dr Francois Naude and Schalk Els.

In the process, the AFG will be able to provide the industry with the training and skills required to improve competitiveness and achieve technological leadership.

The Chair of Life Cycle Engineering (LCE) is a world-first.

Life cycle engineering is closely connected to environmental engineering.

The UPLCE chair is primarily concerned with ensuring that products



Alan Brent



Johan Strasheim

Pictures by *Engineering News* photographer Stephanie Cloosterman

### Why AIDC has been established

The Automotive Industry Development Centre (AIDC) has been established to increase the global competitiveness of the South African automotive industry to world-class levels.

The AIDC is a project of the Blue IQ initiative, a multibillion-rand investment plan by the Gauteng Provincial Government, to invest in 11 projects in the areas of tourism, technology, transport and high-value-added manufacturing to make Gauteng 'the smart province'.

The AIDC works in partnership with business, government departments and other organisations to invigorate economic development within the automotive industry.

Its services include supplier development, logistical services, design, engineering and testing services, human resource development, SME development, government programmes in support of the MIDP and support to the Gauteng Automotive Cluster.

The AIDC has signed contracts with tertiary education institutions to develop relevant human resources for the automotive industry.



Automotive Industry Development Centre (Pty) Ltd  
Your partner in becoming globally competitive

and processes used in motor vehicles are environment-friendly, and will not

damage the environment once they have been retired.

LCE also ties in with sustainable development, and Brent tells *Engineering News* that this subdiscipline of engineering therefore also has social and economic implications.

He believes that it can tie in with the social and economic sciences, and there are great opportunities for multi- and interdisciplinary work.

Brent, a graduate of the universities of Stellenbosch and Chalmers, in Sweden, tells *Engineering News* that LCE has become increasingly popular, due to the size of the international automotive industry, and the prominence of environmental protection in the global marketplace.

This all ties in to the 'triple bottom line' philosophy which is becoming important, as competitive companies have to show that they are contributing environmentally, as well as socially.

'Greening' the supply chain is another popular theme, and Brent informs *Engineering News* that current initiatives in South Africa are world-class in this regard.

The new LCE chair has also led to a number of new courses being offered at UP.

LCE at UP is focusing on post-graduate students, with the first students with master's degrees in LCE-related disciplines expected to graduate by the end of 2004.

Undergraduate students have to do a compulsory course in environmental management, however, with LCE as a subcomponent.

The LCE master's will not stand by itself, but will be earned as a master's degree, either in environmental engineering or environmental management, with LCE as the focus.

■ To page 4