Faculty members honored for scholarship, service

Regents’ Award for Distinguished Public Service

Sridhar Kota

Throughout his career, Sridhar Kota has worked to bridge the gap between theory and practice in engineering research and education, accelerating the translation of academic research to commercialization as president of his own company and through his teaching and public service.

As assistant director for advanced manufacturing in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy from 2009-12, he developed policies and strategies to enhance U.S. manufacturing competitiveness, sparked a vital dialogue about the importance of advanced manufacturing to the nation’s future and helped launch the new Advanced Manufacturing Partnership. He proposed and championed establishment of National Manufacturing Innovation institutes that are being implemented throughout the country. He also launched the National Robotics Initiative and others to enhance the competitiveness of small- and medium-size manufacturers.

A member of the CoE since 1987, Kota has pioneered a new paradigm in mechanical design called distributed compliance that eliminates joints, reduces cost, and improves reliability. In 2001, he founded FlexSys Inc. to bring this technology, including his variable geometry airfoil FlexFoil to market. FlexFoil reconfigures an aircraft’s wing in flight to maximize performance, saving fuel and reducing noise.

Kota holds 25 patents and licenses. He has published more than 65 journal articles, 150 conference papers and has co-authored a textbook. He orchestrated and taught U-M’s first interdisciplinary design course and has taught the Design for Manufacturability course for students and practicing engineers since 1990. He has advised 22 Ph.D. graduates and several hundred graduate and undergraduate student mechanical engineering design projects.

Kota is a fellow of American Society of Mechanical Engineers and has consulted for several dozen companies. His awards include ASME’s Ruth and Joel Spira Outstanding Design Educator Award, Machine Design Award, and Leonardo da Vinci Award and U-M’s Mechanical Engineering Achievement Award and Teaching Excellence Award.