

The University of Texas at Tyler

ENDOWMENT PROFILE

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The SPEA Center for Semiconductor Testing

“OUR CUSTOMERS, or the customers of our customers, are some of the leading electronic technology companies in the world,” remarks David Buhrkuhl, president of SPEA America, a company that began in his kitchen a little more than a decade ago. SPEA America now employs more than 30 electrical engineers and is looking to hire more—and graduates from The University of Texas at Tyler could be outstanding candidates. To that end, SPEA America has invested significant funds in an endowment to establish the *SPEA Center for Semiconductor Testing Fund* in the Electrical Engineering Department at UT Tyler.

Part of SPEA’s gift included semiconductor test equipment housed in UT Tyler’s SPEA Computer Engineering Laboratory. The daily activities of the grant are overseen by Dr. David Hoe and Dr. Mukul Shirvaikar, Chair and Professor of Electrical Engineering.

David Buhrkuhl, a strong supporter of UT Tyler and their engineering programs, has a long-term vision for developing this college-industry partnership, which includes training programs and cutting-edge research for military and consumer electronics applications. He knows the semiconductor test industry is robust despite the lagging economy and foresees a great demand for electrical engineers who are knowledgeable in this area.

Smart phones, medical devices, advanced automotive electronics, avionics systems, consumer products, gaming industry, and geophysical sensors are just some of the electronics that benefit from semiconductor testing. For each new device designed, Buhrkuhl estimates that at least five engineers are needed to support testing, production, and technical support of the device.

The new center is used to introduce hands-on laboratory semiconductor test procedures into the electrical engineering curriculum so that graduates are prepared for a career in this field. Gaining valuable experience on this test equipment, UT Tyler students are able to begin a job with technical training that gives them an advantage in the job market. According to Buhrkuhl, “companies benefit from the estimated six months



David Buhrkuhl with UT Tyler engineering students.

of training a new employee would otherwise require. The companies save a lot of money, making them more competitive in the fast-paced world market of semiconductors.”

UT Tyler has also been invited to join the Collaborative Alliance for Semiconductor Testing (CAST) including industry bell weathers such as Texas Instruments, IBM, Intel and major universities, including Texas A&M University, Auburn University and Georgia Institute of Technology. This collaboration will inevitably result in high-tech research and development applications, thereby benefiting the East Texas economy.

David Buhrkuhl, a pioneer in the high-tech industry, founded and established SPEA America in Tyler, Texas in 1999. The SPEA Center for Semiconductor Testing Fund endowment provides critical support for engineering programs at UT Tyler and was established with the goal of advancing job prospects and success for students, as well as jumpstarting industry collaborative efforts in the area that advance the local economy.

If you'd like more information about how to start an endowment, please contact:

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