Service to the Profession Awards

PEI Professional Engineer of the Year Award

The PEI Professional Engineer of the Year Award honors a licensed engineer who has made outstanding contributions to the engineering profession, the public welfare, and/or humanity. The honoree receives a glass recognition item.

Previous PEI Professional Engineer of the Year Award Winners

2005 ................................................................. Jerry L. Wille
2006 ................................................................. Frederick Wm. (Bill) Koenig
2007 ................................................................. Sonia Maassel Jacobsen
2008 ................................................................. Ronald E. Yoder
2009 ................................................................. Dale Wm. Zimmerman
2010 ................................................................. Rodney L. Huffman
2011 ................................................................. No Recipient
2012 ................................................................. John A. George
2013 ................................................................. Barry M. Jacobson
2014 ................................................................. Guy Fipps
2015 ................................................................. Gregory D. Williams
2016 ................................................................. Dana Osborne Porter
2017 ................................................................. Curtis L. Weller
2018 ................................................................. Kenneth Hellevang
2019 ................................................................. Jay Harmon
2019 ................................................................. Scott Mueller

Michael F. Kocher, PE, is the recipient of the 2020 PEI Professional Engineer of the Year for his contributions to the professional engineering exam and US OECD Coordinating Committee as Nebraska Board of Tractor Test Engineers Chair.

Kocher is an associate professor in the biological systems engineering department at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. In this role, he has taught about a dozen courses and currently teaches courses in equipment testing, fluid power hydraulics, and power and machinery principles. He also conducts research in instrumentation for rapid evaluation of planter seed spacing distributions, testing methods for tractor performance, and logistics and economics of biomass harvesting.

Kocher is also the chair of the Nebraska Board of Tractor Test Engineers, the intermediary organization between the commercial tractor industry and the Nebraska Tractor Test Lab. As chair, Kocher has reviewed over 650 reports of tractor performance tests. Kocher has also led the board in conducting research and developing test procedures that have been adopted and incorporated into the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Code 2 test code for the performance of agricultural and forestry tractors.

Kocher has also worked with the manufacturers and the Nebraska Department of Agriculture to ensure the requirements of the law have been met, including reviewing tests of those models after changes were made to improve their performance.

A 35-year member of ASABE, Kocher has used his extensive expertise to participate on the ASABE Education, Outreach, and Professional Development Engineering Licensure committee. In this role, he contributed to the development of the annual PE exam for agricultural and biological engineers including developing exam questions and the supplied reference handbook for the computer based exam.

Kocher is author or coauthor of 35 peer-reviewed articles and is coauthor on a textbook entitled Fluid Power Circuits and Controls: Fundamentals and Application. Kocher also holds a US patent and coedited the ASABE Distinguished Lecture Series No. 41 in 2020. Kocher credits his success to the teamwork of many individuals on projects of all kinds and sizes. Throughout his career, Kocher has received a number of awards. He received the Nebraska Chapter of Triangle Fraternity Outstanding Faculty Member award, two ASABE Superior Paper awards, and an ASABE Honorable Mention Paper award. He also received the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Engineering and Technology Student Advisory Board Outstanding Advisor award and a Holling Senior Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence.