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2021 Distinguished Maine Professor Award

Susan Collins

Hermant Pendse

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The College of Our Hearts Always

2021 Distinguished Maine Professor Award, Hermant Pendse, PhD.

Recorded via Zoom on June 24, 2021

<https://youtu.be/MJZCejNkj4o>

Run Time : 00:10:36

Transcript is machine generated, unedited, in English.

00:00

[Music]

00:01

the university of maine alumni

00:03

association distinguished maine

00:05

professor award

00:06

is sponsored by wbrc

00:09

architects engineers i'm senator susan

00:13

collins students colleagues friends

00:16

and even families say that you might not

00:19

see

00:20

hemet pense's passion when simply

00:23

talking with him

00:24

but it's really strong like there's a

00:26

deep

00:27

abiding care there for the students

00:31

for the university and for the larger
00:35
community as well barbara hamilton
00:38
recalls professor pence as an engaging
00:42
enlightening instructor very organized
00:45
very clear very able to
00:47
communicate these difficult concepts to
00:50
young students i also remember that dr
00:53
penzi
00:53
is has the distinction of giving me my
00:56
first b
00:58
in a college class he is very convincing
01:01
as a as a teacher he
01:05
emphasizes the right advantages
01:09
and gets the enough excitement
01:14
he has a vision he knows
01:17
what's needed is a great teacher and
01:20
instructor but he's so much more than
01:22
that
01:23
james beaupre admits as many do
01:26
to being at first intimidated by hemet
01:30
he's a mentor he's a guide he's going to
01:33
challenge students and help them grow
01:35

and form to be things that are greater
01:37
than they could ever even imagine
01:38
to make massive impacts just like he
01:40
does i found out if you get five minutes
01:43
he's a helpful guy
01:44
really friendly really neat by getting
01:46
that five minutes of stuff to come by
01:48
he's a busy guy but the key is
01:51
if you need him he will make time for
01:53
you he is
01:54
chair of an important department he has
01:57
taken and transformed what was really
01:59
agricultural engineering
02:01
through a complete transformation to
02:03
biomedical engineering
02:04
and he runs the forest bioproducts
02:08
research institute
02:10
when hemet is at the forest bioproducts
02:12
research institute
02:14
he is half mad scientist if you will
02:18
and half sales person fbri
02:21
recognizes that oil comes from decayed
02:24

organic material
02:26
buried in the ground for hundreds of
02:28
millions of years
02:30
what hemet has been able to do is to
02:32
take
02:33
out the hundreds of millions of years
02:35
basically
02:36
take that natural organic material and
02:39
turn it
02:39
into things that we as a society
02:42
desperately need
02:43
today hamid and his teams are turning
02:46
wood into
02:47
jet fuel literally shifting paradigms
02:51
and how we power our world it took us
02:54
hundreds of years to get where we are
02:56
now it's going to take
02:58
an extended period of time to get where
02:59
we need to be but dr pence's work
03:02
is key to taking and moving us all in
03:05
this direction
03:06
hemet also moves at the speed of
03:09

business

03:10

businesses often move at a much quicker

03:13

pace than academia that's just a fact

03:16

but hemet knows that in order

03:18

to talk to businesses and to work with

03:20

them and collaborate with them

03:22

he has to move at that speed as well and

03:24

he's excellent at that

03:25

i know that not every dad can balance

03:27

work and family

03:28

but my dad he can hemet's daughter says

03:31

his heart is

03:32

on his family even as his mind is on his

03:36

work

03:36

he always has his work iphone he's

03:38

always you know reachable he's always

03:40

thinking about

03:42

work even when we're on vacation or on

03:45

the weekends or at the camp

03:47

i actually have fond memories of going

03:49

to the jeunesse hall barbecues that they

03:52

had

03:53

he's really melded our family with the
03:55
jeunesse hall family and
03:57
it's just something that he's really
03:58
made a priority
04:00
when i think of all the engineers that
04:02
have come from this university
04:04
and all that they've accomplished for
04:06
the community the state
04:08
and this country it's impressive wbrc
04:11
is privileged to sponsor this award for
04:13
hemet pence
04:14
let me tell you why many of our
04:17
engineers
04:17
working with hemet on the design of the
04:19
new engineering design center
04:21
were his students hemet doesn't want to
04:25
just make things happen he wants to make
04:27
big things happen
04:28
he's really good at selling the state of
04:30
maine what the university can do
04:32
what our forest economy what our forest
04:35
industry
04:36

in the state can become he
04:39
really wants the world to be a better
04:42
place
04:44
congrats dad on being named the
04:46
distinguished maine professor
04:47
we're all so proud of you you have been
04:49
a great colleague for more than three
04:51
decades
04:52
it has been an honor to work with you
04:55
you're probably
04:56
the best guide and like that we've had
04:59
in a long time in this institution to be
05:01
a leader to be a difference maker to see
05:03
that
05:04
your efforts and your passion
05:08
has culminated in this award i think is
05:12
is really awesome it's a crowning
05:14
achievement i'm so happy you got it
05:16
and it's so well deserved and i don't
05:19
think distinguished even begins to get
05:22
at
05:23
what you have contributed to the
05:24

university and to the state of maine
05:27
and and i forgive you for for giving me
05:30
a b
05:31
in my first college class
05:35
hemet pence an inspiring visionary
05:39
entrepreneur and educator and
05:42
our 2021 distinguished
05:45
main professor it's my greatest honor to
05:48
be recognized by the humane alumni
05:50
association that boasts more than 100
05:53
000 alumni
05:54
living in 50 states and 100 countries
05:57
this award reflects the awareness and
05:59
appreciation by the larger community
06:02
of the important work our genesal family
06:04
does i have had the honor of serving my
06:07
department in various capacities
06:09
including as graduate coordinator co-op
06:12
coordinator
06:13
and now as department chair and a
06:16
research center director
06:18
i'm most proud of the achievements of my
06:20

students

06:21

and staff one highlight for me was beta

06:24

testing of the online particle size

06:26

distribution sensor

06:28

the prototype that we used in dupont's

06:31

pigment slurries operations

06:33

my phd student gained valuable

06:35

experience

06:36

the system that was designed and built

06:38

at the university main

06:40

exceeded dewpoint's expectations we got

06:43

valuable engineering data

06:46

the another highlight has been my

06:48

involvement in supporting the economic

06:50

revitalization of the state of maine

06:53

this

06:53

includes saving a pilot plant which was

06:56

at the pulp mill in the old town

06:58

and had ended up on an auction block to

07:01

be sold in pieces

07:02

or a scrap metal we were able to find it

07:06

a new home

07:07

at our technology research center and
07:10
reassembling and upgrading it into a 2
07:12
million dollar biomass to bio product
07:14
pilot plant
07:16
now we take the process intermediates
07:18
from this pilot plant
07:20
and process it in a companion synthetic
07:23
crude oil pilot plant
07:24
to make crude oil starting with woody
07:27
biomass like sawdust
07:29
right here in maine as a faculty member
07:33
i have learned that i derive energy from
07:35
my students
07:36
both in classroom setting and working
07:39
shoulder to shoulder
07:40
in our research labs i always try to
07:43
give the students both
07:44
operating knowledge and an understanding
07:47
of the broader context
07:49
of the underlying concepts which allows
07:52
students to view the material
07:53
beyond confines of any particular course
07:57

on the research front i try to select
08:00
few significant and
08:01
interrelated problems and separately
08:04
work on their solutions
08:06
i particularly enjoy creating new
08:08
sensors and instruments
08:10
as well as taking technologies from a
08:12
lab bench
08:14
to a plant floor recently
08:17
at the director of humane forest product
08:19
research institute
08:20
fbri my focus has shifted to r d related
08:24
to conversion of woody biomass
08:27
into fuels chemicals and advanced
08:30
materials
08:31
now our fbi interactions routinely
08:34
include
08:35
mill towns affected by bulk markets
08:38
forest land owners looking for a new
08:40
revenue streams
08:42
and those interested in attracting new
08:44
capital investments
08:45

to maine what i also love is interacting
08:49
with k-12
08:50
students and teachers and showing off
08:52
our pile of plants and discussing how
08:54
our research
08:55
can support their communities i was
08:59
drawn to human
09:00
mainly because of the strong
09:01
relationship that then chemical
09:03
engineering department had
09:05
with industry the university main pulp
09:08
and paper foundation had an
09:10
active industry university support
09:12
committee
09:13
its members were meeting with the
09:15
department
09:16
regularly every six months in those days
09:20
many universities were living off of
09:22
federal grants
09:23
with little engagement with industry i
09:26
saw
09:27
industry engagement as something i
09:29

needed more

09:31

the foundation members turned out to be

09:33

good mentors for me

09:35

for many decades another reason to stay

09:38

came from my many interactions through

09:40

the department of

09:41

industrial cooperation dic

09:44

dic projects brought many contacts and

09:47

we got

09:47

many new ideas for further exploration

09:51

maine has been good to me i am certain

09:54

that this is a proud moment for my

09:56

father

09:56

who is 98. he had a long career that

09:59

culminated in the position of registrar

10:02

at the government college of engineering

10:04

in karat india

10:06

my family is happy and very proud

10:09

my son and daughter who graduated from

10:11

asa adams

10:13

orono high school and past pizza and

10:16

more importantly

10:17

sheila who has been with me hand in hand

10:20

all the way and this journey has been

10:23

great

10:23

for all of us thank you

10:35

you

The University of Maine in Orono is the flagship campus of the University of Maine System, where efforts toward racial equity are ongoing, as is the commitment to facing a complicated and not always just institutional history. The University recognizes that it is located on Marsh Island in the homeland of the Penobscot nation, where issues of water and its territorial rights, and encroachment upon sacred sites, are ongoing. Penobscot homeland is connected to the other Wabanaki Tribal Nations — the Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Micmac — through kinship, alliances, and diplomacy. The university also recognizes that the Penobscot Nation and the other Wabanaki Tribal Nations are distinct, sovereign, legal and political entities with their own powers of self-governance and self-determination.