Mechanical Engineering
Academy of Distinguished Alumni

Philip S. Schmidt, Ph.D., P.E.

Honorary Mechanical Engineer, 2009

BS, Aeronautics and Astronautics, M.I.T, 1962
MSME, Stanford, 1965
Ph.D., ME, Stanford, 1968

Donald J. Douglass Centennial Professor, Emeritus and University Distinguished Teaching Professor, Emeritus
The University of Texas at Austin

After earning his BS in Aeronautics and Astronautics at MIT in 1962, Phil Schmidt joined Bell Helicopter Division of Textron as an aerodynamicist. In 1964, wishing to broaden his career horizons, he enrolled in graduate school at Stanford University, earning his Ph.D. in mechanical engineering in 1968. After teaching for two years at Prairie View A&M College as a Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellow, he joined the UT Austin Department of Mechanical Engineering faculty in 1970.

During his 43 years at UT, Phil taught undergraduate and graduate courses in the area of thermal-fluid systems and carried out research focusing on industrial energy conservation and electro-thermal process engineering, particularly industrial application of microwave and radio-frequency heating and drying. He published over 75 articles in peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings, authored four books, and was issued two patents. He served in a variety of consulting positions with corporations and federal and state energy advisory commissions, and saw administrative service as associate dean of graduate studies (1978-81) and ME associate chair for undergraduate program development (2000-2010).

After a research leave in 1981-82 with the Electric Power Research Institute, Phil founded the Process Energetics Program in the Center for Energy and Environmental Studies, and directed the program until 2010. In 2000, he initiated a major curriculum reform effort in the ME department entitled PROCEED (Project-Centered Education) and served as director of the program until his retirement in 2013.

Phil's top priority was teaching, and he received numerous teaching awards throughout his career. These include, most notably, Texas Professor of the Year from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1994), selection as an inaugural member of the Academy of Distinguished Teachers at UT Austin (1995), the Regents' Teaching Excellence Award (2009), and the Chancellor's Council Outstanding Teaching Award (2010). In 2010, Phil was honored to receive the Chester F. Carlson Award from the American Society for Engineering Education, the Society's highest lifetime achievement award for innovation in engineering education. In 2013, PROCEED was cited by the National Academy of Engineering as an exemplary program for incorporating real-world experiences into undergraduate engineering curricula.

Phil has been an active advocate for increased participation of minorities and women in engineering education. Upon joining the UT faculty after completing his two-year post-doctoral commitment at Prairie View A&M, he and Dr. Tom Edgar of the chemical engineering department started the UT Equal Opportunity in Engineering Program and co-directed the program until a full-time director was hired in 1973. Subsequently, he initiated and directed the UT MITE (Minority Introduction to Engineering) summer program for high-school students, sponsored the formation of Pi Sigma Pi, the minority engineering academic society, and participated actively in various mentoring programs for young women. He was recognized by the Women in Engineering Program as a recipient of the Women's Advocate Award in 2011.

Since his retirement in 2013, Phil has continued promoting young people's interest in science and engineering through volunteer mentoring activities with schools and museums in Austin and Denver, Colorado, where he and his wife, Donna, spend the summer months.

Phil and Donna celebrated their 50th anniversary in 2016. They enjoy spending time with their children, Allan and wife Shari in Plano, Danny and wife Carrie in Austin, and Lauren and husband David in Denver, and especially doting on their four grandchildren, Mira, Maizy, Maya, and Jacob.