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Continuing Momentum

University of Dayton

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Continuing Momentum

When he assumes the role of director for the University of Dayton Research Institute, Jan. 1, Allan Crasto said he is looking forward to building on the strengths and successes the Institute amassed during its first six decades.

Crasto, who has worked at the Research Institute for 27 years and currently serves as associate director, will assume the directorship from John Leland, UD’s vice president for research and executive director of the Research Institute. Leland was named vice president for research in June, but has continued to serve as Research Institute director during the search for his replacement.

"I have a tremendous amount of respect for Allan, and he will bring a great deal to the job," Leland said. "Without exception, he has carried himself with the highest level of integrity. He's never shied away from dealing with very difficult problems, but he's always addressed them mindfully, with heart and compassion."

Crasto has worked to enhance relationships with Research Institute partners, from external customers to UDRI's own research and administrative staff, Leland added, an achievement that mirrors Crasto's own philosophy about Research Institute assets.

"The real strength of the Research Institute has always been its people and their unparalleled customer service," Crasto said. "By ensuring our sponsors are successful, we ensure our own success. I look forward to working with the UDRI leadership team to expand our investments in our people."

Crasto, whose education and career background are in chemistry and advanced materials science and engineering in his native India and in the U.S., joined the Research Institute in 1988 as a research scientist specializing in polymer-matrix composites. During the next 11 years, he was promoted to
senior research scientist, distinguished research scientist, group leader for advanced composites and head of the Institute's former nonmetallic materials division, which has since evolved to the multi-scale composites and polymers division.

As group leader, Crasto helped his team further its reputation for technical expertise in advanced composites and the quickly growing field of nanomaterials among Air Force and civilian customers, leading to increased sponsorship from both sectors. As head of nonmetallic materials, Crasto led his division's revenue growth for on-campus research activities from $600,000 in fiscal year 1999 to $9.6 million in fiscal year 2006 and helped grow its workforce by 43 percent in the same time period.

The nonmetallic materials division also garnered nearly $11 million in state funding from the newly established Ohio Third Frontier under his leadership, paving the way for future awards to the Research Institute from various state programs. UDRI's growth in advanced materials helped propel the University of Dayton from fifth to second place among all universities in the nation for sponsored materials research, a ranking it has held for 11 of the last 12 years, according to reports from the National Science Foundation.

As associate director, Crasto leads technical operations, including the planning, acquisition, performance and growth of research activities at the Research Institute, which has grown from 380 to more than 480 full-time employees since his appointment in 2006 and performed nearly $99 million in sponsored research in fiscal year 2015. He also provides leadership in the management, growth and enhancement of UDRI resources, including employees, finances, equipment and facilities.

Charlie Browning, chair of the chemical and materials engineering department in the University's School of Engineering, said Crasto has a strong track record of promoting collaboration and developing partnerships.

"Allan has unparalleled in-depth experience in attracting and executing federal, state and industry research funding, as well as in developing and executing research programs with and in federal research agencies," Browning said. "He also has shown an uncanny ability to predict or anticipate future research funding trends."

Leland said one of Crasto's greatest strengths is in his ability to not only generate important ideas but to see them through.

"Not only does he figure out the best way to bring an idea to fruition, he is tenacious in his efforts to see it through to completion," Leland said.

He played a principal role in developing the partnership that brought the GE Aviation EPISCenter to
the University of Dayton campus, Leland said. He also wrote and led the proposal that garnered $3.5 million from the state of Ohio for renovation of the University's River Campus building, then spearheaded the planning and implementation of the Research Institute's move of personnel and equipment to the new space.

Crasto holds two bachelors' degrees, one in chemistry and one in the technology of plastics, from the University of Bombay, India. He received a master's of science degree in materials science and engineering and a doctoral degree in engineering science, both from Washington State University.

He was selected as a Fellow of the Society for the Advancement of Materials and Process Engineering in 1999 for distinguished contributions in the areas of advanced materials development and has since served at all levels of SAMPE's international executive cabinet, from parliamentarian to president. He is listed as an author on more than 100 technical articles and holds a number of awards for contributions to his field.

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