



## Douglas Family Establishes Scholarship

University of Connecticut alumni Joel S. and Heidi (Seifert) Douglas have established a scholarship for freshman engineering students, the *Joel S. and Heidi S. Douglas Engineering Scholarship*, to be supported by their generous donation. Preference will be given to female students who graduated from eastern Connecticut high schools.

"We are pleased to be able to help qualified, deserving students achieve a college education," commented Heidi. "We are also passionate about the need for more young people to pursue careers in science and engineering in order to maintain our country's technology leadership. We feel very fortunate to be able to 'pay forward' the help that we've had in our lives."

Joel added, "Helping others is an important part of the human experience. This scholarship is an investment in smart, capable students who will go on to build successful careers."

Joel (B.S. Civil Engineering, '77), P.E., and Heidi (B.S. Biological Science, '77) are, respectively, co-founder and Chief Technology Officer; and founder, president and CEO of MysticMD Inc., an early stage, advanced materials company located at the UConn Technology Incubation Program's Avery Point incubator facility in Groton, CT. Founded in 2003, MysticMD is an advanced materials company developing coating solutions based on proprietary carbon nanotube formulations to solve real world problems. With technology suited to a wide variety of applications, their focus is on select high value, high potential opportunities in key commercial and defense markets.

During his career, Joel has founded or co-founded three start-ups to date; MysticMD is his third. Amira Medical, his first, developed the first alternate site blood glucose meter, AtLast™. The company was acquired in 2001 by Roche Diagnostics, winner of the Medical Device Excellence Award (2000). His second startup, Sterling Medivations, was acquired by Norcross, GA-based SpectRx Inc., which now markets his innovative insulin infusion devices under their SimpleChoice® brand. Joel is working with medical researchers at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand to commercialize their technology in the U.S.

Joel currently holds 70 U.S. patents, 29 FDA product clearances, and numerous foreign patents. In 2004, he was named one of the 100 Notable People in the Medical Device Industry by *Medical Device & Diagnostic Industry* magazine (MD&DI). Joel earned his M.S. in Computer and Information Science from the University of New Haven. He was honored by the School of Engineering in 2005, when Joel was inducted into the University of Connecticut

As successful entrepreneurs, Joel and Heidi each bring different skills to the process. They agree that launching a business requires business, marketing and communications skills and—in the case of a tech start-up—engineering and/or scientific know-how as well. They encourage engineers who are interested in embarking on an entrepreneurial career to take at least some business classes, such as marketing, accounting, business law and management. Heidi commented "As a professional who helps to bridge the chasm between business people and scientists, I find it's imperative for technologists to learn how to convey information, including technical content, in an accessible manner in order for them to truly succeed."

Heidi added "Don't be afraid to take risks. As Woody Allen said, '80% of success in life is just showing up,' meaning, if you don't try, then you'll never get there. And be persistent. You may not get there on the first attempt."

Joel and Heidi met during their undergraduate years at UConn. As a struggling engineering student, Joel had his academic challenges.

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Academy of Distinguished Engineers. Early in his career, he held various positions at Johnson & Johnson's LifeScan, Komag (thin film disk innovator), General Dynamics and United Nuclear.

Prior to founding MysticMD, Heidi was a partner in the high tech industry practice of Deloitte Consulting, where she managed some of the firm's largest engagements at Fortune 100 companies. Heidi began her career in the pharmaceutical industry almost 30 years ago and gained experience in managerial positions at Pfizer and Syntex Inc. In addition to her B.S., she also holds an M.S. in Computer and Information Science from the University of New Haven (UNH) and an M.B.A. from RPI. She is a member of the UNH Board of Governors, chairs the Academic and Student Affairs committee and sits on the Executive and Nominations & Governance committees. Heidi was named a Women of Innovation 2006 finalist by the Connecticut Technology Council. Joel and Heidi serve on the UConn School of Engineering Advisory Board.

Perhaps his biggest challenge was Math 262, which delayed his graduation. Heidi explained that, "Joel flunked 262 the first time he took it. It's the reason he graduated in the class of '77 instead of '76. When he repeated the class during the summer session, the professor made Joel promise he would never take another advanced math class before he [the prof] would give Joel a passing grade." Joel fondly recalls Dr. John DeWolf, "a great model for students," and one of Joel's instructors and Chi Epsilon National Honor Fraternity advisor, who is still an active faculty member in Civil & Environmental Engineering.

The Douglases married in 1977, shortly after Heidi completed her B.S. degree. They moved to Silicon Valley in 1988, and it was there, Heidi said, that Joel was bitten by the entrepreneurial bug and started his first two companies. They returned to Connecticut in 2002 and founded MysticMD in 2003.