Great strides have been made in establishing a southern business and industrial base of plastics and related products, said Steve Killingsworth, director of the University's Louisiana Productivity Center.

Killingsworth said the Center for Plastics, Composites and Polymers is a result of the efforts of Mark L. Habetz, LPC senior plastics consultant, and Doug Lamb, Inc. of Richardson, Texas. Lamb is a plastics equipment manufacturing representative.

"We believe this center to be the only one of its kind in the United States, if not the world. " Habetz said. "It is basically an all-encompassing facility dedicated to the growth and development of the plastic injection industry."

"We hope the Center for Plastics, Composites and Polymers will become a model facility for the development of other facilities of its type across the United States," Habetz added.

Killingsworth outlined the importance of this new center.

Today, Louisiana produces more than 20 percent of all raw plastic stock used in the United States, he said. Yet, less than 0.1 percent of this stock is converted into finished goods manufactured by Louisiana businesses and industry. A center with a well-planned and implemented program responsive to the needs of its clients will bring about quick acceptance of the center and its capabilities.

The Center for Plastics, Composites and Polymers has been developed in cooperation with public universities. This is a step forward, but what is lacking is the link between the pure and applied research and the commercialization of new products.

A major roadblock to the commercialization process is not the availability of high-tech equipment, but the relatively poor application of the new technologies in the development and production of new products and services, Killingsworth said.

The Louisiana Productivities Technology and Innovation Center (TIC), created in 1987, has played an important role in removing the commercialization roadblock, he said. TIC has provided assistance to inventors, entrepreneurs and innovative business people.

Bringing ideas as new products or services to the market place has been the sole purpose of TIC, Killingsworth said. The results have been exceptional. Over the past three years, TIC has engendered 12 new products, patented 24 products and has over 201 products under development. TIC efforts have resulted in the incorporation of 6 new businesses, he said.

The design, development and prototyping phases of many of these products would have been dramatically reduced through the use of plastics, composites or polymers, Killingsworth said.

According to Killingsworth, development goals for the center include those to:

- Design and prototype new products suitable for plastic injection.
- Redesign existing parts for new system configurations to include plastics.
- Develop new processes based on results acquired from research.
- Enhance the ability of business and industry to absorb new plastics, composites and polymers technology into manufacturing processes.

Since the early 1980s, Killingsworth said, when the legislature began providing funding for research, development and technology transfer programs at public universities, this has been a result of the efforts of Habetz and technology transfer to aid merchants is to provide a comprehensive source of application, demonstration, training, prototyping and technology transfer to aid in establishing a southern business and industrial base of plastics and related products, said Steve Killingsworth, director of the University's Louisiana Productivity Center.

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