

engineered products, we can build taller structures and span greater distances, which continues to support wood-based architectural freedom.

Using the research lens, what do you see in the industry's future?

The Department's research program has a strong history and future commitment to working with external stakeholders. Among these, we are proud to claim industry producers, engineers and specifiers, user groups, trade associations, government agencies like the U.S. Forest Service, Agricultural Research Service, and Department of Defense. During the past six years, our department has worked closely with several grading agencies like NeLMA and Timber Products Inspection,

along with sawmills, mat producers, engineers, lift planners, and utility companies to form the North American Matting Association. This group brings together access to mat-related stakeholders to help improve the economic and utility value of mats while also improving jobsite safety and environmental protection. My sense is that this effort will continue and grow as the association works to develop minimum voluntary standards for timber mat production.

Another great development I've noticed is the extent to which the internet facilitates communication among associations, government agencies, universities and stakeholders. More than ever before, I see trade associations like the Railway Tie Association, Southern Pres-

sure Treaters Association, NeLMA, National Hardwood Lumber Association, and many more, speaking with a more unified voice and working toward the common goal of sustainable production of timber products. With that as a backdrop, I've never been more proud or excited to be a part of the forest products research and development sector.



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