Oakland Business Review Article

Teresa A. Chisholm
chisholm@reising.com

Teresa Chisholm
associate attorney,
Reising, Ethington, Barnes, Kisselle PC

"Multidisciplinary" might be the perfect word to describe Teresa Chisholm.

Chisholm joined the Troy intellectual property law firm of Reising, Ethington, Barnes, Kisselle PC. She has an emphasis on patent prosecution, counseling and litigation in chemical and mechanical arts.

It's familiar territory for Chisholm: She graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering and a minor in biological sciences from Purdue University.

At Purdue, she was president of the Tau Beta Pi engineering honor society, receiving the Outstanding Chemical Engineer Award in her class. At Ave Maria School of Law in Ann Arbor, she was executive articles editor of the Ave Maria Law Review.

Q : Are the automotive companies branching out into more diverse technology areas?

A : The automotive companies are generally not branching outside of the automotive industry. Rather, the automotive companies and their suppliers continue to aggressively pursue improvements in the products and manufacturing processes related to their core businesses.

From our perspective as patent attorneys, the quantity and quality of innovation has certainly not slowed down in recent years. Also, the technology developed by automakers and suppliers often finds application in other products and industries.

Q : What is happening to untapped engineers and designers in Michigan?

A : Southeastern Michigan is rich in engineering talent, which makes the area ripe for investment in non-automotive markets. Many engineers are finding success with non-automotive companies that have opened new facilities in Michigan. Some high-tech businesses started by scientists and engineers associated with Michigan's universities have been very successful.

Q : What are some of the projects on your desk?

A : One technology area that I have been focusing on is energy production from renewable resources such as sunlight, water and hydrogen.

The hydrogen fuel cell produces electrical power from the reaction of hydrogen and oxygen.

Although fuel cells pose many challenges, the technology will soon revolutionize the automobile and many aspects of our daily lives.

Another exciting technology area that our firm is involved in is mobile telecommunications. Automakers and suppliers have developed systems that turn the vehicle into a mobile telecommunication platform, providing the driver with enhanced telephone, GPS and data services. Some vehicles now will periodically e-mail the owner a status update to report things such as a need for an oil change, recall reminders, and cell phone and satellite radio subscription and renewal information.

Q : An attorney and chemical engineer is an unusual blend of careers. How did you end up with this speciality?

A : I wanted to get an advanced degree after graduating in chemical engineering from Purdue. However, entering a graduate program in engineering, where I would focus on a very specific area of research, was not appealing to me. Law was a great fit because I had many other interests and enjoyed writing.

You don't have a lot of time in engineering school to take many liberal arts elective classes. So law school really broadened and enriched my education. Through intellectual property, I am able to combine my technical and legal skills in a unique way.

by Laurie Ryba