



2025 COES Alumni of the Year



Chemical Engineering - Joel Mertens

- **Education:**
 - B.S. in Chemical Engineering from Louisiana Tech University (1986).

- **Professional Experience:**
 - Retired manufacturing and engineering leader with over 37 years of experience in the paper industry.
 - Most recent role: Fiberline Area Manufacturing Excellence Leader at International Paper in Campti, Louisiana.
 - Led the recruitment and development of process engineers.
 - Managed Lean/Six Sigma training.
 - Played a key role in process safety initiatives.
 - Previous leadership roles at International Paper:
 - Environmental, Health, Safety & Sustainability Manager.
 - Technical Director.
 - Senior Process Engineer.
 - Focused on safety, quality, and operational efficiency improvements.
 - Earlier career:
 - Spent a decade at Potlatch Corporation in Arkansas.
 - Held various process engineering and supervisory roles.

- **Professional and Community Involvement:**
 - Member of the La Tech Chemical Engineering Advisory Board since 2000.
 - Mentors and supports future engineers.
 - Elder and founding member of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Natchitoches.

- **Personal Interests in Retirement:**
 - Serving in the church.
 - Traveling.
 - Gardening.
 - Spending time with his wife, children, and grandchildren.