

From: [Ruth Ridderman](#)
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Subject: Local Student(s) in National Competition
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Included below is a press release regarding local student(s) who are members of the Rube Goldberg Machine competition team at Ferris State University. Further information is available by contacting Leah Nixon, assistant director of News Services.

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Ferris advances to 2007 National Rube Goldberg Machine competition

BIG RAPIDS – The Ferris State University College of Technology’s Rube Goldberg Machine student team, which included Matt Tomaszewski of Byron Center, a Plastics Engineering Technology major, James Travis III of Cedar Springs and Mike Dunakin of Grand Rapids, both Electrical/Electronics Engineering Technology majors, won the Ferris regional competition held February 24 in the Granger Center for Construction and HVACR on the University’s Big Rapids Campus. The team’s fourth member is Tom Sybrandy of Holt, a Product Design Engineering Technology major.

Ferris’ victory over Michigan Tech has earned them a trip to the March 31 national competition at Purdue University. This will be the student team’s fourth visit to the national competition, having taken second place two out of three years. Tom Hollen, associate professor, Mechanical Engineering Technology, is the team’s advisor.

The Rube Goldberg Machine competition started in the 1950s at Purdue University, but slowly died out until its revival in 1987. It is named after Reuben Garret L. Goldberg, co-founder and president of the American National Cartoonist Society. One of the most famous cartoonists in history, Goldberg earned lasting fame for his Rube Goldberg machines – machines that perform simple tasks in exceedingly complex ways.

This year, the challenge was to build a machine that could squeeze the juice from an orange into a pitcher, and pour the pitcher into a cup in 20 or more steps and in no more than two minutes. The students at Ferris built a machine that completes this task in 345 steps. If it runs successfully at nationals, it will claim a new Guinness World Record.

According to Hollen, students learn a great deal from participating in this competition. “They learn more engineering than one can imagine. They also learn to work as a team, to develop an idea and then make it into a working concept, and overall how to succeed. I like to think they may learn more than they will in most classrooms.”

The team and the machine are judged on multiple criteria. First, the general impression category awards points for theme, Rube Goldberg spirit, explanation/description of machine and team chemistry. Next, any timing issues, such as the machine taking too long, can cost teams points. Finally, the run-related category awards points for each completed task, the ability to follow the flow of the machine and Rube Goldberg style steps. Human

interventions and objects leaving the machine will cause points to be deducted.

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