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NEWS SERVICES

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SAE Competitions Reviving Up for Ferris Students

BIG RAPIDS – As the school year ends and summer starts, most students go home and work or relax – not Ferris State University’s Society of Automotive Engineers members. They are putting final preparations on their vehicles for their upcoming competitions.

Ferris’ SAE organization participates in the Formula SAE Michigan and Baja SAE Wisconsin and in 2010 they will be adding a third in the Formula Hybrid.

This year, the Formula competition is held at Michigan International Speedway, Brooklyn, Mich., starting today, May 13 to 16 and the BAJA is at MGA Research Facilities in Burlington, Wis., June 11 to 14.

The student’s involvement with SAE Formula started in 2005. “Some students in the Mechanical Engineering Technology program decided they wanted to go to the SAE World Congress in Detroit to set up a Ferris booth for the first time and were introduced to the Formula project,” said Chuck Drake, professor, Mechanical Engineering Technology and advisor for the Formula team. They have been participating in the Formula series since 2006.

Erik Olsen, Mechanical Engineering Technology student and team captain for the Formula, is optimistic about this year’s vehicle. “The team is upbeat and is going to show up with an amazing car that is poised to make Ferris proud.”

Ferris has been participating in the Baja series since 2005. Unlike Formula's once-a-year event, they usually compete twice a year. There is the large competition in June and each February they compete at the Winter Baja in Houghton, Mich., at Michigan Technological University. At the most recent Winter Baja, Ferris won the long-jump – this is the first trophy the Ferris Baja team has won since participating. The Winter Baja allows the team to test the vehicle to see if there are modifications that need to be instituted before the big competition in June.

Both the Formula and the Baja vehicles are designed and built from the ground up by students in various Engineering Technology programs at Ferris. “The participation in programs like SAE gives students the opportunity to apply their knowledge in a real-world environment that enables them to develop their skills at a higher level providing, thus providing them an advantage in the work force,” said Gary Gage, assistant professor, Automotive Service Technology and SAE Baja advisor.

Students in SAE come from programs within the College of Engineering Technology. Having different skill sets is a big learning experience for the SAE members. With more than 90 percent of the vehicle parts being produced by the students, it opens an interchange between different departments.

“We have Manufacturing students take a design from the Mechanical students and they will make suggestions on how to make that more manufacturable,” said Bruce Gregory, professor, Manufacturing Engineering Technology. “To design a part that is easily manufactured, that is something we have a hard time duplicating in the classroom – they can get that experience here on Formula and Baja.”

For more information on Ferris' SAE chapter, visit www.ferris.edu/technology and click student competitions. SAE Collegiate Design Series, including the Formula and Baja can be found at <http://students.sae.org/>.

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