The Society of Automotive Engineers

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Become a part of the vision, join Owls Racing!

Students, Start Your Engines!

Developed in 1981, by the Society of Automotive Engineers and held annually in Michigan, the competition evaluates students on every level. Putting their classroom knowledge to the test, students team up to design and build a Formula 1 style car. Divided into two main events, the FSAE International does not just challenge the team’s ability to build a car, but also the ability of students to develop a successful business proposal based on gathered research and data. In these Static Events, students get a taste of the business world as they face a panel of expert judges. All in an effort to convince judges that their car design best meets the demands of the amateur autocross racing market.

The Dynamic Event is the final event and features a series of tests—acceleration, autocross, skid pad, and endurance. The car must live up to the engineering goals set forth in the Static presentation. Events such as the skid pad, test the car’s cornering ability as the car must turn in full circles clockwise and counterclockwise. Once these evaluations are passed, the car’s handling, fuel economy and reliability is tested in an Endurance event, in which the car travels around a 13 mile track.

Owls Racing Stats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Static Events</th>
<th>Dynamic Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation—91/104</td>
<td>Acceleration—59/72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design—60/103</td>
<td>Skid-Pad—52/72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost Analysis—92/105</td>
<td>Autocross—59/75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fuel Economy—15/42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Endurance—23/42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Placed 31st overall—outpacing MIT, Georgia Tech, USF, and Carnegie-Mellon...

The Owls Racing Team from left to right: Elio Saenz, Vincent Grilli-Meunier, Jameel Rose, Matthew Shanosky, Grant Browning, Veronica Puga, and Vic Ramani.

Become a part of the vision, join Owls Racing!
On May 11, 2008, eight Florida Atlantic University students, guided by Dr. Abtahi and Dr. Masory, bid sunny South Florida farewell and traveled to Michigan to compete in the 2008 FSAE International. Placing 31st overall, in a competition of 121 registered teams, the Owls Racing team outpaced competitors like MIT, USF, and Georgia Tech. While students are not likely to forget this accomplishment, their success is impressive for other reasons, as it reflects dedication they willingly put forth to attain success.

Facing a limited budget and few sponsors, the road to success was not easy. Grant Browning, project manager, realized in order for the team to stand a chance against universities sponsored by the likes of Audi and BMW, negatives would need to be transformed into positives. “The team last year definitely raised a good amount of funds,” says Browning, “But they did not complete the car so we were able to use spare parts purchased last year to enhance our car.” Grateful for the spare parts and generous donations from Hoerbinger and Auto-Salon, the team began work on the car. Juggling school and jobs, finding the time to work on the car in the machine shop was definitely a sacrifice. “Working on the car opened up a lot of doors for me,” team member Vic Ramani says, “If I was not on the team I would not have been hired by my current employer—being on the team shows I have a strong engineering background.”

Participation in the FSAE International is just what prospective employers want to see, as students work in a real world environment to solve problems. Electrical engineering major, Jameel Rose, credits the long hours in the machine shop as equipping him with a broader span of knowledge. “Before I knew practical information—I knew how something worked, what I didn’t know was why. Learning the theory behind building a car helped me see the different ways of achieving a goal”.

The real world training provided through the Owls Race Team is essential for students pursuing a career in the automotive industries, as it forces students to handle situations that simply cannot be duplicated in the classroom. “Just a week before the competition, the engine on the car quit. After the engine blew, I thought, forget about it, we’re done,” professor and chair of the Mechanical Engineering Department and faculty advisor to the team, Dr. Oren Masory, recalls, “The next day they showed up with an engine.” Few sponsors and pressed for time, the team dug into their own pockets, pooling together eleven hundred dollars to purchase a faster engine.

Arriving in Brooklyn, Michigan, over a span of four days the car’s performance level was put to the test as their competitors ranged from Western Australia to South Korea. “A few essential changes must be made,” says Matt Shanosky, team president. “Last year’s car was too heavy. So we’re definitely going to try and make this car lighter and more driver-friendly in the cockpit.”

Examining their strengths and weaknesses, team members understand success can be gained through a slight shift in focus. Scoring just 160.59 points out of the 325 points possible, team members lost valuable points in the Design, Presentation and Cost Report events. “We did pretty poorly on all the Static events and I felt it was a little demoralizing for the team,” says Browning.

After competing in the FSAE International, team member Vincent Grilli-Meunier, realizing the importance of drawing students from non-engineering, says, “It’s pretty obvious that half of the [FSAE] event has nothing to do with the actual engineering of the car”. Presentation is key, as Statics is considered to be the
non-technical side of the event, with its focus on the presentational and marketing aspect of the car. While it may not be a favorite among young engineers, it is an element of the event the team is hoping to strengthen for next year. “The competition is such a wide-ranging event,” Dr. Masory says, “We can use help from various disciplines to help with fundraising, modifying the website, budgeting and finance, and graphic design.”

Reflecting on what it took to reach Michigan, team members also appreciate the friendships formed in the machine shop. “The time we spent in Michigan was too short. I made friends that I will have for the rest of my life,” says Matthew Shanosky. But the team insists that they are not riding off into the sunset just yet, as they are more than confident that a happily ever after ending is in the near future. However, they refuse to allow their vision fade into a distant memory. In anticipation for next year’s competition the team is beginning preliminary work on the car in the machine shop and meeting with potential sponsors. Originally a vision and now a full-fledged reality, the team is seeking sponsors and new members to join them on the road to Michigan next year.

“Learning the theory behind building a car helped me see the different ways of achieving a goal”.
—Jameel Rose, Owls Racing Team member

Florida Atlantic sendoff reception, seated in car: President Frank T. Brogan. From left to right: Vincent Grilli-Meunier, Grant Browning, Vic Ramani, Jameel Rose, Matt Shanosky, Oscar Williams, Iios Saenz, and Veronica Puga.

Practice test, Jameel Rose.
We worked with a very limited budget, so Hoerbinger’s generous donation got us off to the right start. With their help we purchased the needed parts for the car.

Q: A lot of the other teams did not complete the Endurance test. What type of engine was used?
A: We used a 2005 Suzuki GSXR 600—a bunch of us chipped in some money to purchase it.