



SIUE Cougar Baja Season Ends After Successful Year

April 18 2019 11:51 AM



EDWARDSVILLE - The Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Engineering's Cougar Baja team concluded another successful competitive academic year at a Baja SAE® event hosted by Tennessee Tech University in Cookeville, Tenn.

Baja SAE® consists of competitions that simulate real-world engineering design projects and their related challenges. Engineering students are tasked to design and build an off-road vehicle that will survive the severe punishment of rough terrain. Each team's goal is to design and build a single-seat, all-terrain, sporting vehicle that contains the driver. The vehicle is to be a prototype for a reliable, maintainable, ergonomic and economic production vehicle that serves the recreational user market.

Senior Joe Trautman, president of the SIUE Cougar Baja team, explained that the planned four-day event included a variety of aspects. "The schedule involved a sales presentation to make your baja car marketable, a design presentation to explain our engineering design decisions before engineers from large automotive engineering companies, a series of dynamic events that test pulling ability, maneuverability, and suspension testing, and a 4-hour endurance race on the last day," he said. "Because of bad weather moving in the last day, they wisely compressed the events on Saturday and Sunday to avoid the storm."

Trautman pointed to highlights on the trip that included passing both tech and brake checks on the first attempt, while many other teams struggled with one of the two. In the maneuverability competition, SIUE placed 15th among 96 teams.

As in any competition, sometimes there is disappointment. "According to the live stream in the endurance test, we were on track to place between 13th-19th, which would have been our team's best finish ever, but our gearbox broke an hour before the race was over," Trautman said. "We were forced to watch the last hour of the race and ended up 40th, but still well within the top half."

There are three annual SAE events, one in the Midwest and one each on the east and west coasts. The events host 100 teams, and this year more than 20 percent of those teams were international.

The object of the competition is to provide SAE student members with a challenging project that involves the design, planning and manufacturing tasks found when introducing a new product to the consumer industrial market. Teams compete against one another to have their design accepted for manufacture by a fictitious firm. Students must function as a team to not only design, build, test, promote, and race a vehicle within the limits of the rules, but also to generate financial support for their project and manage their educational priorities.

The SIUE School of Engineering offers one of the most comprehensive and affordable engineering programs in the St. Louis region with eight undergraduate degrees, five master's degrees and a cooperative doctoral program. Students learn from expert faculty, perform cutting-edge research, and participate in intercollegiate design

competitions. Companies in the metropolitan St. Louis area provide students challenging internships and co-op opportunities, which often turn into permanent employment. Students gain hands-on experience in the School's state-of-the-art facilities, including the new Fowler Student Design Center.

The Baja Cougar Team ready for action at the Baja SAE® event hosted by Tennessee Tech University in Cookeville, Tenn.