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World-wide College Students Build Solar Boats for Competition and Learning

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World-wide College Students Build Solar Boats for Competition and Learning

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – With the home of the Wright Brother's first bicycle shop as a backdrop, Dayton will host the **20th annual World Solar Splash competition on June 11-15** at Eastwood Park in Dayton, Ohio. The event will bring universities from all over the world together to participate in a five-day on-the-water competition.

Cedarville University is the most decorated participant in Solar Splash history, having won the Collegiate World Championship seven out of the last ten years. Dr. Tim Dewhurst, senior professor of mechanical engineering and faculty advisor for Cedarville's solar boat team, led the effort to bring the Solar Splash to Dayton. He said that having the competition in Dayton will add exposure to the world-class event and also ties in well with Ohio's goal of advancing innovation with renewable energy sources.

Currently, in addition to Cedarville University, other teams that will participate include: the University of Dayton, Stony Brook University, The College of New Jersey, Middle Tennessee State University, Geneva College, Cal-Poly Pomona, the University of South Carolina, the University of Arkansas, and the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez.

Dewhurst is also hoping to have elementary and middle school students at the event. He expects to introduce a Junior Solar Splash event this year, a model solar boat competition for elementary and middle school students. He said, "I hope to run this as a pilot project with a few schools this year and have the races during Solar Splash at Eastwood Park."

The event will test the teams of engineering student's design and production skills through a technical inspection and a series of on-the-water competitions. Prior to arriving at the competition, each team is required to produce, either by building, buying, or receiving parts, a piloted boat up to 18 feet in length powered by 480 Watts of solar power with 1 kW-hr of stored energy in batteries.

Dewhurst said that Cedarville's team is unique in how much of the boat they build themselves. He said that the teams winning streak began with a student designed hull. Dr. Robert Chasnov, senior professor of engineering said, "The result of one student doing a design of the hull made it so uniquely perfect that it allowed our team to win. Since then, the work that the students have done is to make it smoother and faster and more streamline." Chasnov said other teams took notice of Cedarville's design and replicated it. "Every time we win a competition [other teams] take pictures so that they can replicate what we did the previous year, which requires us to stay ahead by just that much," he said. "And that's the group of students we end up having. They have the ability to be creative, do more and make things better as they work in conjunction with the faculty."

During the competition teams battle for the title of Collegiate World Champion by gathering points based on their performance during a qualifier, high-speed sprit race, long endurance race, and slalom event. In addition to the on-the-water races, judges review a technical reports submitted by each team. Last year, Cedarville turned in the fastest slalom time in competition history. Dewhurst said that although the boats are run by solar power and only reach speeds up to about 30mph watching can get pretty exciting. "Especially, if one of those boats is yours and you are just watching it inch along past the others," Dewhurst said. "It gets tense."

Dewhurst said that Cedarville's success points to the excellence of the university. "I think that faculty involvement is huge. The amount of time that the faculty spends with the student is a point of excellence," he said. "Our engineering program is very strong, and the boat is just part of the proof."

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University attracts 3,400 undergraduate, graduate and online students to more than 100 areas of study. Inspiring greatness for over 125 years, Cedarville is a Christ-centered learning community recognized nationally for rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings and leading student satisfaction ratings. Visit the University online at www.cedarville.edu.