

12-18-2017

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Recommended Citation

Weinstein, Mark D., "Cedarville Students Collaborate with GM on Future Car" (2017). *News Releases*. 592.
http://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/news_releases/592

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 18, 2017

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Cedarville Students Collaborate with GM on Future Car

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – The automobile of the future could be shaped, in part, by Cedarville University industrial and innovative design (IID) students. This fall, senior design students completed an extensive academic design of a Chevrolet-branded, 2+2 battery electric concept car under the supervision of an instructional design team from General Motors Design Center in Detroit.

The 22 students worked with a clay sculptor, digital sculptor and the lead designer from the Chevrolet brand studio. The Detroit-based GM Design team mentored the students, providing hands-on instruction. Instructors and students worked four and a half weeks on the project at the International Center for Creativity (ICC) in Columbus, the instructional partner for Cedarville's unique industrial design program. Cedarville University is the only Christian university in the United States to offer an industrial and innovative design program -- and its collaborative program with the ICC is ranked No. 5 nationally, according to CollegeValuesOnline.com.

"This project was about as 'real world' as it can get," said Jim Stevenson, president of ICC. "Since it was our first time working with the GM team, it was a big learning curve for both of us, but we are extremely proud of what the students were able to accomplish. While quite a few of our students are interested in careers in transportation design, the ones that aren't worked just as hard, and it was difficult to tell them apart in some cases."

"Working with the GM designers was such a great honor," said Josh Zaborowski, from Syracuse, NY. "Hearing their comments and input was really challenging and encouraging throughout the whole design process. The fact that no matter what you complete, you can always go back and challenge yourself and push it forward even further is something I will continue to apply to my professional career."

Each student completed a concept for the project, then seven teams were formed based on the best seven overall concepts. Each of the seven teams was tasked with completing an overall design vision, customer persona, concept sketches, digital renderings, two clay models, orthographic view tape drawings -- a drawing that represents a three-dimensional object in two dimensions -- and refined sketches. The students began their work on September 18, then presented their work approximately one month later.

Jim "JD" Orr, part-time instructor and ICC advisory board member and co-founder, who worked at GM design for approximately 15 years early in his design career, was the Cedarville instructor of record for the design development portion of the project.

"General Motors Design participates in collegiate sponsorship projects to contribute to the development of creative talent," said Kris Bastedo, Collegiate Relations Manager, GM Design. "Collaborative efforts with collegiate institutions bring awareness to students and parents of the well-regarded creative careers available in the automotive industry."

"Learning from someone who lives and breathes their craft was an invaluable experience," said Kelly Miller from Bloomington, Illinois. "We learned so much about specific roles within groups and how to live within the task you have been given, but also how to help your teammates out. In the end, it matters what the final product is. A lot of good communication within the team moves the ideas forward; that was my major take away."

The ICC frequently partners with design teams from corporations to provide students with rich academic experiences that are rooted in real world scenarios and timelines, and the sponsored projects in the transportation field are growing. In 2015 and 2016, ICC seniors completed two separate design activities for Honda Research and Development and worked with the Center for Automotive Research at The Ohio State University in the spring of 2017.

"We were extremely impressed with the high level of involvement the GM staff dedicated to this project," said Stevenson. "They didn't just drop the project off at the door. They were here, in the studio, day in and day out, building into these young people's lives and helping shape the talents of future designers."

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,963 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about Cedarville University, visit www.cedarville.edu.