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“Shark” Supermileage Car Named SAE Grand Champion

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- After four years of body design and three years of building, Cedarville University's newest energy-efficient vehicle, Karcharias, took home gold in the virtual 2020 SAE Supermileage competition. Karcharias was the overall grand champion after winning first place in the oral presentation and second place in the written report.

Karcharias is all about fuel efficiency, not speed. To get the highest miles-per-gallon, a past senior design team reduced drag -- the resistance produced by air hitting a moving surface -- by changing the shape of the car and moving the two front wheels inside the vehicle. The vehicle's unique shark-like shape is where it gets its name, which means “shark” in Greek.

This year's chassis team started work to improve the steering and suspension to reduce friction caused by resistance from the car wheels, the engine team worked on a reduced-size engine to increase efficiency and the body team joined the top and bottom halves of the vehicle and cut the final window shape. Unfortunately, the team was unable to complete their work before students were sent home because of the coronavirus pandemic.

When the on-track event was canceled due to the pandemic, the competition put more weight on the 25-page design report and the 15-minute oral design report that were judged by the SAE technical inspectors.

“Normally, the performance of the car is the main thing that speaks,” explained Zack Bretz, team captain and 2020 mechanical engineering graduate from Lafayette, Indiana. “Since we would not be running the car, our team had to figure out how to present the strong points of the car in a report and over the slightly unreliable medium of video calling.”

The team struggled to complete the two reports because of the “stay-at-home” orders nationwide caused by the pandemic. Regardless, the team was able to submit their written report just a mere two weeks after Cedarville students were sent home and prepared a 59-side PowerPoint oral report that was presented to the judges on June 4. The countless hours of work by each student paid off when Cedarville was crowned the overall champion.

“Excellence in effort is one of the things Dr. Zavodney pushes,” Bretz said, referring to mechanical engineering professor and team advisor Dr. Larry Zavodney. “Regardless of our circumstances, we want to do everything as unto the Lord and demonstrate the high quality of Cedarville.”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,193 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, including its bachelor of science in [mechanical engineering](#), bachelor of science in [electrical engineering](#), bachelor of science in [computer engineering](#), bachelor of science in [civil engineering](#), and bachelor of science in [computer science](#), strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings and high student engagement ranking. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.