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Engineering project wins EPA funds, kudos

May 20, 2008

By Melissa Gerber and Jillian Mapes

A team of Ohio University engineering and technology students has earned an honorable mention from the Environmental Protection Agency for their online environmental game designed to improve public awareness of chemical exposure.

The Russ College of Engineering and Technology students recently competed in the fourth annual National Sustainable Design Expo at the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Almost 60 teams represented colleges and universities across America, with six receiving funds to further their projects and 24 earning honorable mentions. Each team's work was judged on problem definition, innovation and technical merit, connections to sustainability, measurable results, evaluation method, implementation strategy and integration of the competition as an education tool.

The Ohio University students' Chemical Exposure Awareness Game, funded by a \$10,000 EPA grant, is played in the online virtual world Second Life. Modeled after Monopoly, the game exposes players to various everyday chemicals to illustrate their positive and negative effects. Players also are encouraged to strive for more sustainable lifestyles, such as eco-friendly housing and healthy food consumption.

The expo was the second phase of the EPA's People, Prosperity and the Planet, or P3, competition. The first phase, for which the team won the grant, asked teams to demonstrate how they planned to research and develop innovative designs to address challenges to sustainability in both the developed and developing world.

Associate Professor of Computer Science Chang Liu and Professor of Civil Engineering Tiao Chang led students Ying Zhong, a doctoral student in computer science; Yanhui Fang, a doctoral student in chemical engineering; En Ye, a doctoral candidate in computer science; and Jourdan Siemer, an undergraduate in chemical engineering, in developing the game.

"Our team (had) the only computer game to compete in the expo," Zhong said. "Our game was very popular at the expo, especially with children."

Liu agreed, adding, "Students waited in lines to play our P3 game."

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I think this was evidence that our team had made progress toward the goal of improving chemical awareness through engaging programming."

More than 40 government, industry and non-government organizations support the competition. For more information on the Ohio University team's project, visit <http://vital.cs.ohiou.edu/vitalwiki/index.php/P3>.

To speak with a media representative regarding this story, please contact Russ College Director of External Relations Colleen Carow at 740-593-1488 or girtonc@ohio.edu.

Related Links

Russ College of Engineering and

Technology: <http://www.ohio.edu/engineering/>

VITAL Lab project Web site: <http://vital.cs.ohiou.edu/vitalwiki/index.php/P3>

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