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PROJECTS FROM LOS ANGELES TRADE TECH COLLEGE, UC IRVINE, CAL STATE LA RECEIVE INAUGURAL ECO INNOVATORS RECOGNITION

First-ever competition is part of Metropolitan’s Spring Green Expo

Sustainability projects developed by students at Los Angeles Trade Technical College, the University of California, Irvine and California State University, Los Angeles captured the top recognition in Metropolitan Water District’s first ECO Innovators Showcase competition.

The competition was part of Metropolitan’s 6th annual Spring Green Expo, an educational event featuring more than 65 exhibits by college students, businesses and public agencies at Metropolitan’s downtown Los Angeles headquarters building last Thursday, May 16. The contest attracted projects from 17 universities and community colleges throughout Southern California in three categories—water conservation, energy conservation and green transportation.

“Metropolitan is proud to have the opportunity to showcase the hard work and creativity of these university and college students,” said General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger. “We recognize that today’s students are tomorrow’s leaders and enjoy being a part of their early success.”

A 12-member team of LA Trade Tech students took home the ECO Innovator’s water conservation award for their small-scale building prototype aimed at demonstrating the viability of developing a residential or commercial structure using the latest water-saving, food-producing and renewable energy-using solutions.

The student-built model featured the latest innovations in rainwater harvesting and catchment, photovoltaic (PV) technology and hydroponics food production. The team was comprised of students Mohamed Macauley, Tracy Sanders, Marcello Stewart, Salvador Torres, Khadija Macauley, Ernesto Mejia, Cesar Salinas, Catina Delery, Isabelle Ochoa, Isaias Gamboa, Jelani Thomas and Shaka Lumumba.
Doctoral candidate Beth Karlin and student Cassandra Squiers of UC Irvine claimed the competition’s energy conservation award for their project, which examined the potential to harness data being collected through the burgeoning smart grid. Such data can provide consumers with information about their own energy consumption to better understand and control their energy use by making it more visible and establishing a nexus between actions and impacts.

The ECO Innovators green transportation award was presented to a four-member student team from Cal State Los Angeles for their hydrogen fuel cell vehicle project, which included an on-campus refueling station design. The school team included students Michael Strada, Marc Aguilar, Hector Nava and Jose Padilla, with Dr. David Blekhman, professor of the school’s Technology, Power Energy and Transportation Program, serving as advisor.

With a top speed of 25 miles per hour and a range of 65 miles, the team-built vehicle—the Hydrogen Super Eagle—has competed in the Shell 2011 Eco Car Challenge in Houston and has been on display at the Long Beach Grand Prix, the Los Angeles Auto Show and the Santa Monica Alternative Car Expo. The vehicle is currently being used for a research project on renewable fuels.

In addition to the school teams earning the top awards, other universities and colleges participating in the ECO Innovators Showcase competition included California State Polytechnic University, Pomona; California State University, Long Beach; California State University, Northridge; Chapman University; Fullerton College; Loma Linda University, School of Public Health; the New School of Architecture + Design; Otis College of Art and Design; Pasadena City College; University of California, Los Angeles; University of California, Santa Barbara; University of California, Riverside; University of Southern California (two teams); and Woodbury University.

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*The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a cooperative of 26 cities and water agencies serving nearly 19 million people in six counties. The district imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local supplies, and helps its members to develop increased water conservation, recycling, storage and other resource-management programs.*