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## UW-Platteville represents at NASA-sponsored rocket launch competition

PLATTEVILLE, Wis. – The University of Wisconsin-Platteville represented in the Wisconsin Space Grant Consortium Collegiate Rocket Launch competition, sponsored by NASA, on April 22. WSGC recently announced the winners of the launch, and UW-Platteville and three of its Collaborative Engineering Program (CEP) teams took four of the top five places out of 13.

The [WSGC Collegiate Rocket Launch competition](#) takes place annually. According to WSGC, the purpose of this competition is to provide an “opportunity to demonstrate engineering and design skills through direct application. It allows the teams to conceive, design, fabricate and compete with high-powered rockets. The restrictions on the rocket motors and dimensions are limited so that knowledge, creativity and imagination of the students are challenged. The end result is a great aerospace experience for students that would not otherwise be available in the region.”

Teams from colleges across the state follow a process that takes an entire academic year before the competition. This process includes submitting a notice of intent, an online presentation, an oral presentation, various meetings and the final competition. Teams are scored in six different categories — design report, flight readiness presentation and quality of fabrication, competition flight, post-flight performance evaluation report, project management, and educational outreach — for a possible total score of 100 points. The first-place prize is \$3,000, second place is \$2,000 and third is \$1,000.

The UW-Platteville CEP team from UW-Fox Valley placed first with a score of 92.60; UW-Platteville's Pioneer Rocketry team took second place with a score of 92.40; the CEP team from UW-Washington County placed fourth with a score of 86.80; and the CEP team from UW-Sheboygan took fifth place scoring 84.20.

The UW-Platteville CEP team from UW-Fox Valley entered the competition for the first time this year. Team advisor Brian Eberwein says placing first is gratifying because their win "showed all the hard work and diligence of the team." The Fox Valley team met on a weekly basis throughout the school year to stay ahead of WSGC's timeline and address complications. They spent many hours researching high power rocketry and electrical generation options since no team member had previous experience with either.

The UW-Fox Valley team includes team leads, Brian Eberwein and Kathryn Lenz; and members Drew Eisenberg, Maddison Sauer, Shawn Schumacher, and Justin Walters.

UW-Platteville's Pioneer Rocketry team enters the competition every year and placed in the top three four years in a row. Team advisor Dr. Katie Rabidoux says the team began working on its rocket design in October and spent the winter and spring building and testing it. Rabidoux says the team "lost the original rocket during a test launch less than two weeks before the competition took place and had to rebuild a new rocket from scratch." The team impresses Rabidoux because they overcame a large obstacle and ended up finishing in second place.

The UW-Platteville Pioneer Rocketry team includes team captain, Tyler Sorensen, and members Christina De Vries, Morgan Fenger, Andy Lee, Eli Rand and Bryan Reyes.

The UW-Platteville CEP team from UW-Washington County rocket team entered the competition for the first time this year. Team member Vanessa Sawatzke believed that "people may see [them] as an underdog because [they] are from a two-year campus," which is why their team feels validated and proud. They spent

three to four hours a week throughout the school year working on their rocket. A highlight of this experience for Sawatzke was the community outreach. She says, “We visited a middle school in town and shared our rocket and team experience with three STEM classes. I hope we inspired a few kids to pursue a future in a STEM field.”

The UW-Washington County CEP team includes Donald Christianson, Arber Shehu, Max Read, Vanessa Sawatzke, Joe Gawrys, Sophia Zappia, Casey Krakowski, and advisor Swapnil Tripathi.

Finally, the UW-Platteville CEP rocket team from UW-Sheboygan also entered the competition for the first time this year because they felt they gained enough people to take on the large project. Team member Martha Steffen recognizes that there were many factors working against the team, as they are a small school with a new program and new club; they also had the minimum number of team members allowed to compete. Steffen says, “We proved we were capable by placing in the top five” despite the tough factors. The team worked on their rocket weekly, as well as chit-chatting in the halls when they saw each other. They began work in early September and finished only days before the final competition.

Steffen would like to acknowledge two other team members, Robert Grady and Ian Goakey, who served as project managers. She says, “They deserve a lot of the credit and have gone steps further inspired by the competition — Robert is getting licensed to launch larger rockets, and Ian is building his own drone this summer.” Guy Campbell is the advisor of the UW-Sheboygan team.

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