

Capstone projects displayed

By Nick Manella
FOR THE COLLEGIAN



Kelsey Morris, Collegian

Students describe their design projects.

Seniors from the College of Engineering came together Thursday in the Bryce Jordan Center to showcase projects they had spent the semester on.

There were about 120 industry-partnered projects on display, most of which were capstone projects.

Teams of four to five presented projects varying from those based on agricultural engineering to computer science. Projects varied from a device that assisted wheelchair-bound people in climbing stairs — which partnered with Everett Hills, a medical doctor from central Pennsylvania — to a machine that automatically inserted screwdriver bits into packaged cases for purchase, a project sponsored by Stanley Black & Decker. The popular wheelchair design was not the only disability-based project on display. Other designs included a bicycle for paraplegics and even an adaptive seat to assist paraplegic sailors.

But not all were consumer goods.

Members of the agricultural engineering team presented a method to locally produce canola oil for Penn State dining commons deep fryers, which could then be used as biodiesel to fuel university vehicles, all while meeting US Food & Drug

Association and U.S. Department of Agriculture standards. Kyle Lewis (senior-computer engineering) and Frank Peronace (senior-computer engineering) were part of a team that participated in the robot competition. The team's task was to build a robot that autonomously collected ping-pong balls from a playing field and brought them into a corner repository, all on a \$250 budget. Though the competition was canceled due to two teams not being competition-ready, all three teams still had the opportunity to present their projects.

Amidst the crowd were representatives from the various companies who partnered with the students and came to see the projects. Even with companies present, some students were unfazed in presenting their work.

"I wasn't really that nervous to have the people from actual companies here," Lewis said. "It was pretty cool to have them come up and talk to us about our project."

Student poses as lobbyist

By Nathan Pipenberg
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Ben Smith, a former tobacco lobbyist, began promoting his 2010 U.S. Senate run in front of the Allen Street gates Thursday — a campaign that he promised would focus on protecting corporate interests.

Sound unbelievable? It is. And that's because that campaign was actually an elaborate ruse designed to protest corporate America's newfound freedoms in political advertising.

The satirical campaign was the product of a project organized by students in COMM 514 (Political Economy of Communications), with T.C. Corrigan playing the role of the sleazy Senate hopeful.

Corrigan (graduate-mass communications) stood in front of the Allen Street Gates for an hour Thursday afternoon, handing out flyers and mingling with passersby. He said he dressed for the part as best he could — wearing a suit and tie, with the back of his jacket was adorned with logos of companies like Wal-Mart and ExxonMobil.

Rachel Guldin was one of the students from COMM 514, and said the group designed the project "in the spirit of the Daily Show and Colbert Report," two satirical comedy news shows on Comedy Central.

Guldin (graduate-media studies) said the class was about the study of how money affects the political sphere. Their project targeted a recent Supreme Court case that allows the corporate world to make unlimited contributions to political campaigns.

"One point we were stressing was that the case has the potential to open the floodgates for corporate spending," said Corrigan.

Megan Duke, another student involved in the fake campaign, said the project is an example of "cultural jamming," where activists try to disrupt mainstream cultural ideas by re-figuring cultural symbols or logos. In this case, Duke (graduate-media studies) said they did this by appearing to be a serious political candidate, even though they pushed ideas most Americans would not agree with.

Corrigan said that when someone brought up a talking point at the campaign, he would try to spin the issue to support corporate issues. For instance, he said when someone asked him about his stance on education, he said that schools are "a place where a lot of people see the opportunity for business investment."

Most people who he talked to seemed to get the satirical message, Corrigan said. "We got laughs at some points," he said. "There were people who understood the joke and also got involved in the project as protesters."

Once the campaign was over, Corrigan said he left Allen Street feeling like the afternoon ended well.

"I felt like it was a success," he said. "But it's also not something that has to end at this point."

Corrigan said the group is planning more stump speeches and creating a Twitter account for the imaginary politician in the future.

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