

## NATIONAL CHEM-E-CAR COMPETITION CHALLENGES USF STUDENTS TO FIND ALTERNATIVE FUELS



**Tampa, Fla. (November 12, 2009)** – The 11th Annual Chem-E-Car Competition encourages tomorrow's engineers to create potential alternative fuels and drives innovation as engineering undergraduates construct chemically powered vehicles. Students representing 31 U.S. colleges and universities competed with schools advancing to the national competition by placing in regional Chem-E-Car contests.

A USF team of undergraduate chemical engineering students designed and built a car that was required to carry 250 grams of water for a distance of 77 feet, which the students do not learn until one hour before the competition begins. The USF team went into action making all the critical calculations and adjustments needed to meet the contest objectives. The USF team used a fuel cell to power its car but in the past some teams have used unusual ingredients such as beef liver and hydrogen peroxide.

"We were 16th in line for the first run and mixed our chemicals and loaded them about when the 10th car was running and everything seemed to be going fine," said Jessica Burnham, president of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers USF Student Chapter.

The team's car relies on pressure to reach the finish line. Disappointingly, the car did not generate enough voltage to move, even after team members performed some quick troubleshooting techniques.

"Unfortunately, the car would not move again and we determined that the fuel cell had failed, which may have been caused by contamination of chemicals or damage to the cell during transportation," said Jessica.

In the spring there will be a Regional Conference and competition. The USF team plans to have a new car design ready for that race.

*The University of South Florida is one of the nation's top 63 public research universities and one of only 25 public research universities nationwide with very high research activity that is designated as community engaged by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. USF was awarded \$380.4 million in research contracts and grants in FY 2008/2009. The university offers 232 degree programs at the undergraduate, graduate, specialist and doctoral levels, including the doctor of medicine. The USF System has a \$1.8 billion annual budget, an annual economic impact of \$3.2 billion, and serves more than 47,000 students on institutions/campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg, Sarasota-Manatee and Lakeland. USF is a member of the Big East Athletic Conference.*

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