

NIU's Supermileage Takes 3rd in International Competition

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DeKALB, Ill. — The NIU's Supermileage team is on a roll again. The team of engineering students at NIU's College of Engineering and Engineering Technology (CEET) won third place in the international SAE Supermileage competition in June.

SAE Supermileage is a competition for teams of engineering undergraduate and graduate students. The teams work to build the most fuel-efficient single-person vehicle possible. Typically, teams compete to see which vehicle can travel the farthest on a gallon of gas. This year the competition was held virtually with teams presenting written and verbal presentations due to the pandemic.

“We’re so proud of the Supermileage team, they worked extra hard this year and succeeded in spite of the challenges that the pandemic presented,” said CEET Dean Donald Peterson, Ph.D. “The competitive teams like Supermileage are a great example of how we emphasize hands-on experience for our students so that they can apply what they’ve learned in the classroom to the real world.”



The NIU Supermileage Team poses in front of their vehicles in fall 2019 in DeKalb, Illinois.
Source: NIU Supermileage Team

NIU's Supermileage team started in 2008.

Each year, the Supermileage team has worked to improve energy efficiency while maintaining or improving safety. This year, NIU's team of 22 undergraduate students along with team advisor David Schroeder, Ph.D., spent nine months on design development, analysis, and fabrication of their primary project.

“We decided to make a big change by developing our own engine head in-house,” said Supermileage Team President Matthew McCoy. “By March, we finished fabricating every component for the engine head and assembled it but were unable to test it due to COVID-19.”

This year's achievement was not the team's first successful lap around the track. In 2019 the team won top honors in the overall efficiency category for its gasoline-powered vehicle that traveled 1,525 miles on one gallon of gas at the Shell Eco-Marathon Americas competition at Sonoma Raceway. The team also consistently placed in the top three at SAE

for eight of the 11 years in which it has competed, with the team's highest mileage being 1,888 MPG in 2018.

“Having a virtual competition isn't optimal, but it was great to have the chance to still showcase what the team has accomplished this past year,” said Lauren Bangert, vice president of the Supermileage team and the driver of the vehicle.

“Although the dynamic event is the most looked forward to the static events are also important,” she added. “We adapted quickly and focused more on our presentation and writing skills so that we could successfully convey our team's accomplishments to the SAE judges.”

About NIU

Northern Illinois University is a student-centered, nationally recognized public research university, with expertise that benefits its region and spans the globe in a wide variety of fields, including the sciences, humanities, arts, business, engineering, education, health and law. Through its main campus in DeKalb, Illinois, and education centers for students and working professionals in Chicago, Hoffman Estates, Naperville, Oregon and Rockford, NIU offers more than 100 courses of study while serving a diverse and international student body.

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The NIU Supermileage Team working on their vehicle at Still Hall in DeKalb that competes in international competitions each year. Source: Northern Illinois University