

Race Cars, Dream Jobs, and Hands-on Internships



Mechanical Engineering students **Darren Johnson** and **David Elia** pose with one of the cars they helped design and race to first- and third-place overall finishes at the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) Mini-Baja West Competition in Portland, Oregon. Johnson, who graduated in June 2004, and Elia, a senior, say their paid internships working in industry will have a profound impact on their careers.

Johnson did two Multiple Engineering Cooperative Program (MECOP) internships while at OSU, one at Cascade Microtech and one at Warn Industries. The Warn

internship turned into a full-time job offer after graduation and Johnson is now a design engineer at the company. According to John Vandecoevering, vice president of ATV Business Development, the MECOP internship and subsequent hire was a winning combination.

“We’re really glad to have hired Darren,” Vandecoevering says. “Not only is he work-ready, but he’s also a highly capable and creative engineer who has learned how to be very productive. The MECOP program gives students this work-ready advantage. They also learn a skill that will be with them the rest of their careers—the ability to fit into any work environment and quickly become productive.”

Elia, a senior in Mechanical Engineering with a minor in Business who enjoys downhill mountain biking, dreams of being an engineering project manager some day. Following the team’s successful finish at the Mini-Baja West Competition, the recreational vehicle manufacturer Polaris contacted Elia to offer him a paid internship at the company’s Victory Motorcycles Division headquarters in Osceola, Wisconsin. “This is my dream job, and I got it before graduation,” Elia says, with a grin. “And the amazing thing is: they called me!”

Darren Johnson was among the first class of 11 MECOP Pre-Select students.