GM Milford Hosts Dynamics Testing For Student EcoCAR Competitors

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The auto dynamics phase of the ongoing EcoCAR student car competition concluded at the GM Milford Proving Ground last week.

As you read this, the same set of 16 student cars that were at Milford for most of last week are this week in Washington, D.C. – including a White House visit on Tuesday. Officially called “EcoCAR: The Next Challenge,” the big car renovation project brings together 16 universities and their students, all of whom are tricking out GM-provided vehicles but with 21st century fuel economy advances built in lieu of bling.

"If you look at what we're trying to do from a corporate point of view, it actually goes much further than this competition," observed GM's Michael "Micky" Bly, executive director of Global Electrical Systems, Hybrids, Electric Vehicles and Batteries.

"We honestly believe that's the future," Bly said.

All of which brings Bly, GM, the DOE and 16 student cars to industrial Building 16 on the campus of the Milford Proving Ground.

"There, the competition challenged those 16 teams gathered from across North America to reduce the environment impact of vehicles by minimizing the vehicle’s fuel consumption, petroleum use and emissions, while maintaining its utility, safety and performance.

The goal for the students is to design and build advanced propulsion solutions that are based on categories from the California Air Resources Board (CARB) zero emissions vehicle (ZEV) regulations.

Students are encouraged to explore a variety of solutions including electric, hybrid, plug-in hybrid and even hydrogen fuel cells.

In addition, they incorporate lightweight materials, improved aerodynamics and utilize alternative fuels such as ethanol, hydrogen and biodiesel.

GM senior executive Tom Stephens, right, chats with Emory Riddle student Stephen Renick as part of the EcoCar competition held at Milford Proving Ground last week. Renick will begin work as a validation engineer at the GM Tech Center later in July.

GM senior executive Mary Barra issued the following statement in the EcoCAR event program:

"Throughout the competition," she writes, "these 16 universities have gone from researching and selecting propulsion technologies to integrating their subsystems into Chevrolet-donated vehicles.

"In year two, teams tested their "mule vehicles" at our Desert Proving Grounds in Yuma, Ariz., and then presented their work to judges in San Diego.

"In the final stage, the teams meet at our company's Milford Proving Ground where their vehicles will undergo tests that mimic traditional testing that is typically done on GM car production."