

Automotive News

College students get keys for a Cadillac Lyriq EV in latest chapter of EcoCar competitions

Each of the 15 universities will be given a 2023 Cadillac Lyriq EV and challenged to optimize the vehicle's efficiency and enhance its propulsion system while maintaining performance

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Can a bunch of college students solve some of the most vexing automotive engineering challenges facing the industry?

Over the next four years, 15 universities across North America will be competing to engineer the most efficient battery-electric vehicles possible while combining connected and autonomous tech – and keeping them fun to drive for consumers.

The [EcoCar EV Challenge](#) is managed by [Argonne National Laboratory](#) and sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy, General Motors and MathWorks.

Each university will be given a 2023 Cadillac Lyriq and challenged to optimize the vehicle's efficiency and enhance its propulsion system while maintaining performance. The teams must address any issues that arise with the car's hardware and software.

Beyond working on the cars themselves, students serve in a variety of roles, from communications to business, to emulate the real-world experience of working in the EV industry.

"This competition trains students to enter the work force with advanced desired skill sets that employers seek out," Steve Carlisle, president of GM North America, said in a video previewing the competition.

The EcoCar EV Challenge is the latest in the [Advanced Vehicle Technology Competitions](#) series, which has existed since 1988. Over that time, the multiyear competitions sponsored by the Energy Department have included 93 universities and more than 27,000 students. This is the first battery-electric challenge; the last one was focused on hybrid vehicles.

The competition will begin this fall and end in May 2026. Among the participating universities, five are minority-serving institutions. They will be granted \$10,000 in seed money to fund a full-time student's education at each university, the companies said.

Teams from all schools will also be tasked with finding equity issues in mobility and will need to recruit underrepresented minorities through outreach.

"This EcoCar challenge is going to help us build a workforce around this soon to skyrocket EV market that is diverse and inclusive," U.S. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said in a statement.

Six of the 15 universities have never taken part in one of the challenges before. They are: Illinois Institute of Technology; University of California, Riverside; University of California, Davis; University of Texas at Austin; Bethune-Cookman University and Wilberforce University.

Wilberforce will be partnered with Ohio State University, and Bethune-Cookman will be partnered with Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

The remaining schools chosen are Georgia Institute of Technology, McMaster University, Mississippi State University, University of Alabama, University of Waterloo, Virginia Tech and West Virginia University.