

Students try nautical ideas they hope will float

By Eric Abin
Contributing writer

The FGCU College of Engineering has decided to prove it has ideas that can float by entering a couple of upcoming competitions.

The first is the 18th annual Cape Coral Cardboard Boat Regatta, hosted by the Rotary Club of Cape Coral. The engineers have big plans and aspirations for the competition and projects are already under way.

The cardboard boat regatta is an annual event in which participants must build a boat and race it. The rules are simple: The boat must be built entirely from cardboard (the only exception being the type of glue or tape used) and "let your imagination reign supreme," according to the official website.

The race is open to all competitors, including clubs, organizations, individuals, families and youth groups.

To participate in this year's race, the engineers are in the process of building a fully functioning, 12-seat Viking boat, with the skeleton of the ship nearly completed already.

Corey Smith, vice president of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) at FGCU, will be captaining the Viking boat along with his crew members.

They plan on making their appearance as exaggerated and epic as possible, which includes "full Viking gear, Viking music" and whatever they imagine an entrance worthy of a Viking would look like.

That is, of course, if they manage to entice enough people into volunteering. They need people to help finish building the boat and people to help row it the day of the race. They welcome volunteers, and everyone who helps will be allowed to participate in the pre- and post race festivities. Several students from non-engineering majors have already enlisted.

"I would like to thank the amazing group of people working on these projects. Some of these students have no engineering background at all and are out here giving their weekends to us, enthusiastically and unselfishly," Smith said.

The second event is the Southeastern Student Conference for ASCE, held by Tennessee Tech University, in March. The FGCU students are aiming to build a concrete canoe. The captain of this project will be the president of the ASCE, Chris Conti.

The boat must then go through a series of tests in order to be recognized, the first of which is a float test. The boat will be filled entirely with water and must be able to float.

"We design the concrete. It is a head

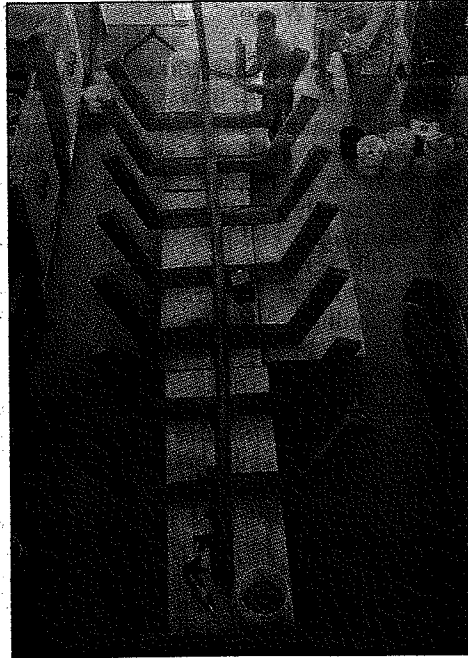


Photo courtesy of Corey Smith

The College of Engineering is constructing boats for the Cardboard Boat Regatta and the Southeastern Student Conference.

to head race, judged on aesthetics and a technical paper," Conti said.

Twenty-six schools are participating in the competition, including 13 schools from Florida. The team will be building the boat at Eagle Expo this weekend. The mold will sit for about 30 days in the Holmes Hall courtyard.

In past years each school had to design their own boat design as well as the concrete mix. To level the playing field all schools build to the same dimensions.

"It brings it down to your engineering skills rather than your naval architecture skills," Conti said. Each boat will be 20 feet long and about 160 pounds, according to Conti.

"It sounds completely impossible, but they are engineers," said Jonathan Cohen, a criminal forensics major who is helping out on both projects.

Although the engineers are optimistic, they are also entirely aware of the challenges presented by both events. They encourage anyone who wants to participate to come and lend their support in the coming months.

"This is an exciting time for FGCU's young engineering department, as this is our first attempt at the concrete canoe or the cardboard regatta," Smith said.

Anyone who is interested can contact Corey Smith at asce@eagle.fgcu.edu.