Western-sponsored UCR Team Takes Home Top Honors for Sustainable Water Project

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Western’s commitment to partnering with local educational institutions to develop the water leaders of tomorrow has recently earned University of California Riverside Bourns College of Engineering students’ top honors. The team’s reusable, recyclable “Sustain-a-Drain” project won not only the Open Task competition but also the 2012 Intel Environmental Innovation Award, the top award at the Waste Management and Research Consortium, which was held in Las Cruces, N.M. The consortium is run by the Institute for Energy & the Environment.

“Western is proud to partner with UC Riverside, a premier institution of higher learning,” said Western’s General Manager John V. Rossi. “Riverside already holds the title of Most Intelligent City, and it’s easy to see why with tomorrow’s leaders developing innovative water technologies to keep water secure and safe for future generations.”

The “Sustain-a-Drain,” team, comprised of Kawai Tam, Ph.D, who served as the team advisor, and four engineering students, Sarah Bates, Elizabeth Hortsman, Thomas Kwan and Shanin Quazi, was challenged with designing a storm drain insert filter and indicator out of 100 percent recycled materials.

Similar products are currently on the market but none include an indicator that tells the user when to clean it. Storm drain inserts are important to prevent contaminated runoff from greasy food or auto shops from entering storm drains. Additionally, the filters can be reused and the indicator can be refurbished.

Tam explained that “Sustain-a-Drain” is part of the next evolution of sustainability. “With a low-cost, reusable item protecting our water sources, we will be able to conserve and preserve resources for years to come. We are thankful that Western is such an incredible supporter of innovation that will help keep our water safe and clean,” she added.

These new filters have already been installed around UC Riverside’s fleet yard.

Western Municipal Water District provides water supply, wastewater disposal and water resource management to the public in a safe, reliable, environmentally sensitive and financially responsible manner.

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