

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fourth-year Chemical Engineering students explore biofuel production

Students present their Ontario Centres for Excellence-funded research into the design and feasibility of biofuel production in Sudbury

Sudbury, ON, April 27, 2009—An audience was on hand yesterday for two thesis presentations by fourth-year Laurentian University students in the Chemical Engineering program. The students presented their findings on the feasibility of a biofuel production facility in Northern Ontario that uses only feedstock produced on non-agricultural land.

“Researchers at MIRARCO are growing a variety of energy crops on mine tailings and this project examines the use of these crops as a source of biofuel feedstock,” said Ashley Scott, supervising professor and a MIRARCO Technical Director. “From an ethical standpoint, it’s important that we not use good agricultural land for fuel production when it could be better used for growing food for human consumption.”

The two groups were tasked with making a comprehensive plan that looked at design issues as well as economic factors. They also had to consider the challenges that go with biofuel production such as transportation costs, feedstock supply, energy and water consumption to name a few.

Funding from the Ontario Centres of Excellence’s Connections initiative supported the lengthy studies. The initiative provides funding to undergraduate students who address a technical problem defined by the participating company—Green Zone Farms in this case. Representatives of the OCE were in attendance.

“It’s always great to see student presentations that have relevance to industry needs,” said Anne-Marie Harte, Manager of Business Development with the Ontario Centres of Excellence (OCE). “Students are gaining valuable experience by addressing real-world challenges in an academic setting, it helps both the companies involved and the students’ future career prospects.”

OCE Connections initiative— The Ontario Centres of Excellence Connections initiative supports collaborations between final year undergraduates (preferably in teams) and industry partners. These partnerships address a technology problem defined by the participating company and provide lasting benefits to all involved. Student participants get an opportunity to apply their skills to real-world problems, helping them develop as innovators. Partnering companies can find - and potentially hire - young talent. OCE invests up to \$3,500 per team in individual university/college Connections projects.

MIRARCO— Mining Innovation, Rehabilitation and Applied Research Corporation, founded in 1998, is a not-for-profit applied research and technical service company formed through collaboration between Laurentian University and the private and public sectors. MIRARCO is located in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada, and serves as an innovation bridge between researchers and industry. Visit www.mirarco.org for more information.

Contact: Dr. John Ashley Scott

Professor of Chemical Engineering
Director of Sustainability, MIRARCO
Laurentian University
jascott@laurentian.ca
(705) 675 - 1151 Ext 2283