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Drexel University wins EPA future technologies award

PHILADELPHIA (May 7, 2008) -- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has selected Drexel University as a winner in EPA's fourth annual People, Prosperity and the Planet (P3) competition for an innovative biodiesel project created by Drexel students.

"These innovative students from Drexel University not only show technologies for a greener future, but demonstrate the passion and innovative thinking that will lead us there," said Donald S. Welsh, regional administrator for EPA's mid-Atlantic region.

This national competition, sponsored by EPA's Office of Research and Development, encourages college students to create sustainable solutions to environmental problems through technological innovation. These sustainable solutions must be environmentally friendly, efficiently use natural resources and be economically competitive. Each P3 award winner receives funding up to \$75,000 to further develop their designs and implement them in the field or move them to the marketplace.

In their winning project, Drexel students designed and built a reactor that produces biodiesel more efficiently. Currently, production of biodiesel from waste oil and grease is hindered when the free fatty acids in the waste combine with the lye added during production to form soap. The winning project redesigned the process for producing biodiesel from waste oil to use bubbling alcohol vapors and acid catalysts that avoid soap formation so that biodiesel can be produced more efficiently.

Drexel was one of six universities winning EPA's 2008 P3 award. More information on Drexel's project and the other winners is available at http://es.epa.gov/ncer/p3/project_websites/2008/2008awardwinners.html.

Support for the competition includes more than 40 partners in the federal government, industry and scientific and professional societies.

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