

Local students in the driving seat for Formula One crown

THE University of Ulster and Antrim engineering company, Schrader Electronics, have come together to support an ambitious group of local students in their quest to become the 2008 Formula Student Champions.

The team from the University have just returned from the Silverstone leg of the competition and are preparing to travel to Hockenheim later this week, home of the German Grand Prix, to take part in Europe's biggest student motor sport event, 'Formula Student'.

The competition, which is run in the UK by the Institute of

Mechanical Engineers, challenges students to design, build and race a Formula 1 style racing car - and the team from University of Ulster will compete against other students from across Europe in a four-day contest for a chance to win this coveted title.

The car which has been built from scratch by the students will participate in both static and dynamic events and it is important that the team have the skills to

both present and drive.

The skills learned through participation in the competition are central to the successful transition for the student from academia to industry.

Michael Dawson, Human Resources Development Manager for Schrader Electronics, said the squad were already proving their mettle.

"The team at the University are very impressive," he said.

"The ability to manage such a large and difficult project to a successful outcome is no mean feat and it is encouraging to see that these are the calibre of students available for industry in the future.

"Unfortunately the number of students choosing engineering of any sort appears to be declining.

"Schrader growth targets for 2008 alone are between 20-30 per cent and we need to continue

to build up our highly-skilled, well-educated workforce to meet our future expansion targets.

"We are fully supportive of initiatives which benefit those interested in or studying for engineering qualifi-

cations and hope that we will have a long and fruitful relationship with the University in this competition which benefits both organisations."

The team at Schrader Electronics have recognised that the availability of high grade engineering students within Northern Ireland is limited and supporting this programme gives them a 'unique connection' to the University.

Dr Justin Quinn, Lecturer in the School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering said the interaction and support between industry and

academia is now 'more important than ever'.

"Schrader's support of this initiative within the University will help to enhance the learning experience, resulting in a more industry-ready student with practical as well as theoretical experience."

Team Captain Ronan Lavery, who hails from Glenavy, said the entire squad were enjoying the experience.

"This is a fantastic project which challenges students to work as a team and to put the skills taught in lectures into practice.

"We also have to present the car as a business, with full cost analysis which looks very good on your CV if you are pursuing a career in motor sport.

"In addition it opens the door for other career opportunities in the engineering industry. For example, I successfully

secured a summer placement with Schrader Electronics which is an invaluable opportunity.

"On behalf of the team, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Schrader for their support in this project as it enabled the team to travel to the competitions.

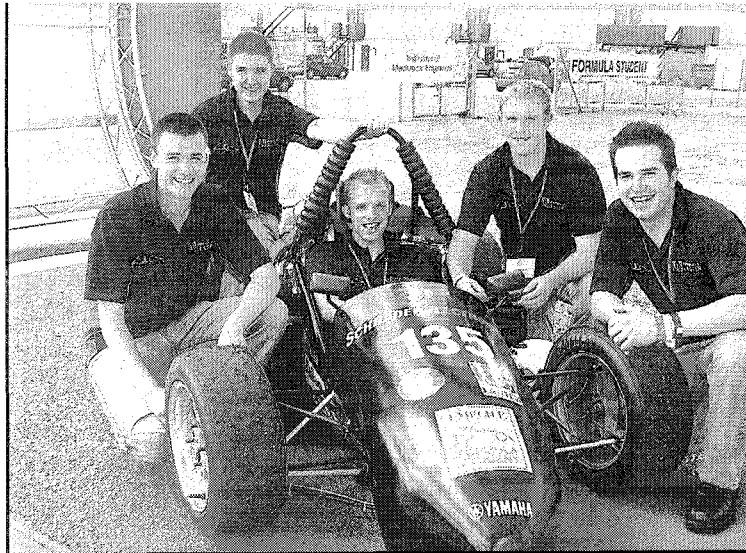
"In addition the financial assistance from Schrader enabled us to carry out vital repairs to our engine after our race at Silverstone to ensure we will definitely get off the starter grid next week!

"We are proud to be representing both the University and Northern Ireland in Germany and look forward to competing against world class engineers."



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Pictured at the 'Formula Student' event in Silverstone is the University of Ulster team including Chris Robb from Nutts Corner, Brian Matthews from Crossgar, Ronan Lavery from Glenavy, Andrew Boyd from Coleraine and Sean Connolly from Newry. GA332901S