

DETROIT, Sept. 30, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- The Steel Market Development Institute's (SMDI) Wheels Task Force, in partnership with Michelin, kicked off its fifth annual Steel Wheel Design Competition with Southfield, Mich.-based Lawrence Technological University (LTU) last week. The competition – which took place on the LTU campus – provides transportation design students with real-world experience, while showcasing steel wheels through innovative styling and a lightweight design. SMDI is a business unit of the American Iron and Steel Institute.

Integrated within the LTU curriculum, student designers are tasked with styling multiple advanced alloy steel wheels based on SMDI's Lightweight Steel Wheel Project that are lightweight, cost competitive and manufacturable, while also influencing the wheel market with a product that's appealing to consumers.

"The Steel Wheel Design Competition is a great way for the students to work one-on-one with designers, engineers and other industry experts," said Todd Fletcher, chair of SMDI's Steel Wheel Design Competition and senior applications engineer at Maxion Wheels. "The project not only helps them prepare for future jobs in the design industry, but shows them the importance of communicating steel's design benefits to consumers."

Students will be judged by a panel of industry experts at the unveiling in March on several criteria: material celebration; changing customer perception by communicating environmental benefits and performance; creativity through a unique and innovative design that maintains functionality; and an executed design concept that complements the vehicle's aesthetics. Students will be selected for scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$2,000.

"This year, the students will focus on how steel wheels are not only durable and lightweight, but how they can be stylish and attractive to the customer, feasible for the wheel makers and help automakers meet the new fuel economy standards," said Ron Krupitzer, vice president, automotive market, SMDI. "We're looking forward to seeing the students' creative designs, that we hope wheel designers can use and consumers will want."

AISI serves as the voice of the North American steel industry in the public policy arena and advances the case for steel in the marketplace as the preferred material of choice. AISI also plays a lead role in the development and application of new steels and steelmaking technology. AISI is comprised of 24 member companies, including integrated and electric furnace steelmakers, and 127 associate members who are suppliers to or customers of the steel industry. AISI's member companies represent over three quarters of both U.S. and North American steel capacity. For more news about steel and its applications, view AISI's website at www.steel.org.

The Steel Market Development Institute (SMDI) grows and maintains the use of steel through strategies that promote cost-effective solutions in the automotive, construction and container markets, as well as for new growth opportunities in emerging steel markets. For more news or information, visit www.autosteel.org or follow us on twitter at [www.twitter.com/smdisteel](https://twitter.com/smdisteel). SMDI investors include:

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