

THE DUNN COUNTY NEWS

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TUESDAY FEBRUARY 19, 2008

Last modified: Monday, February 18, 2008 11:15 AM CST

UW-Stout's sustainability program finds ZENN

Although students may not like receiving parking tickets, they may appreciate the new electric car that helped the parking meter attendant deliver them.

The University of Wisconsin-Stout has purchased a "Zero-Emission, No Noise" fully featured electric vehicle — known as a ZENN car — as part of its campus sustainability efforts. The car will be used by Parking Services for security and safety patrol of campus parking lots.

Designed for neighborhood or urban use, the ZENN vehicle also makes sense for a campus, Keith McCarten of UW-Stout's security and police services said.

"I was interested in taking the lead in switching to a vehicle that is both less expensive to operate and more ecologically friendly," McCarten said. "Many of our parking customers, especially students, are concerned about the carbon emissions of traditional internal combustion engines, and this was a good way to demonstrate that we share those concerns."

The ZENN vehicle can drive for 30 to 50 miles on one charge from a standard electrical outlet, at a maximum speed of 25 miles per hour. Charging the vehicle seven times is equal to one tank of gas, which according to ZENN's marketing materials, makes its energy usage equivalent to 245 miles per gallon of fuel.

At a petite 10 feet long and five feet wide, the ZENN vehicle seats two people. Its estimated operating cost is one to two cents per mile, compared to a conventional gas vehicle's cost of eight to 12 cents per mile.

In addition, the vehicle is low maintenance. Its exterior panels are rustproof and dent



Lauren Jacobson, of Bloomington, Minn., stands next to UW-Stout's new electric vehicle. Jacobson, a senior studying food systems and technology, works for UW-Stout's Parking Services. Submitted photo/for Dunn County News

resistant for long-term durability. And because the ZENN is solely electric, it eliminates the replacement and repair costs of oil changes, oil filters and tune-ups associated with internal combustion engines in gas vehicles. Brake wear also is greatly limited due to the ZENN's lower driving speed and its regenerative braking system, which helps to recharge the vehicle's batteries as it brakes.

"I'm hoping that use of the ZENN can serve as a laboratory for assessing the benefits of increased use of this kind of vehicle in other areas of campus," McCarten said.

"The sustainability effort at Stout is spread across all departments and depends on the initiative of individuals like Keith," Raina Clark, UW-Stout environmental sustainability coordinator, said. "We have many faculty, staff and students who have volunteered to take on projects in recycling, composting and other areas because sustainability is important to them personally. Keith's success in bring the first completely electric vehicle to campus shows that we can make great things happen."

For more information about the ZENN vehicle, contact McCarten at mccartenk@uwstout.edu or (715) 232-2552.

For more information about other sustainability initiatives at UW-Stout, contact Clark at clarkra@uwstout.edu or (715) 232-1588.

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