

Failure is not an option

Building a race car tests the mettle of Watson students. BY PATRICIA PROVEN '97

Inspired by Binghamton mechanical-engineering students who've gone before them, six recent graduates and two undergraduates made a competitive pledge this year. Their goal: over the course of two semesters, to design a race car for two Mini-Baja competitions this spring, with an eye to breaking the University's record of 15th among 62 cars in the eastern region.

Organized by the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE), an international

industry group founded in 1905, the Mini-Baja contest is a way for students to prove their mettle to themselves as well as to potential employers. "Companies want to sponsor these events because they're looking for the best of the best," says Sam Barill, SAE programs manager.

The race car must "survive the severe punishment of rough terrain and, sometimes, water," according to SAE guidelines. It must also withstand a rollover and collision. "The safety of the drivers is really important to the

event coordinators," says recent Binghamton graduate and team captain Tim Levo '07, who explains that in the past, "some cars have rolled over, some of the frames bent too easily."

The Binghamton crew also wanted to improve maneuverability. Team members shortened the new race car by seven inches and enhanced the transmission to allow the auto to reverse. "Last year, we only had forward, so [we wanted] the ability to back up and try to do the turns," says Mike Sander '07.



The first Mini-Baja team: (from left) sophomore James Draper, Wai Chak Luk '07, Mike Sander '07, Chris Luchkiw '07, Joshua Goldman '07 and Tim Levo '07, seated. Not pictured is team member Kyle Bright, a senior.