

09/13/2007

Robotic minivan drives itself on Rice track

BY JADE BOYD
Rice News Staff

A team of faculty and students from Rice and Freie Universität Berlin researchers hopes to vie this November for the \$2 million prize in the prestigious international robotics competition "Urban Challenge," sponsored by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

"Team Berlin" demonstrated its robotic automobile "Spirit of Berlin" this week at the bicycle track west of Rice Stadium.

Team Berlin was among 36 semifinalists selected by DARPA last month. Team Berlin is currently seeking sponsors for the next leg of the competition.

Semifinalists will next compete in the Urban Challenge National Qualification Event Oct. 26-31 at the U.S. Army's urban training facility in Victorville, Calif. The top 20 teams will move on to the Urban Challenge finals at the same location Nov. 3.

Team Berlin's German members have been building autonomous robots since 1998 under the direction of professor Raúl Rojas. The group is a two-time world champion and five-time European champion in robotic soccer. Rice's group, led by statistics professor Javier Rojo, is helping create Spirit of Berlin's complex software.

Urban Challenge will simulate military supply missions in busy city traffic. Robotic vehicles must merge with traffic, negotiate busy intersections and traffic circles and safely complete the required course in less than six hours. The top three finishers will take home prizes of \$2 million, \$1 million and \$500,000.



JEFF FITLOW

A team of faculty and students from Rice and Freie Universität Berlin were among 36 semifinalists selected by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency to participate in the prestigious international robotics competition "Urban Challenge."

DARPA's 2005 Grand Challenge was held on a 132-mile desert course in California. Four vehicles finished under the required 10-hour limit, and DARPA awarded the \$2 million grand prize to the Stanford University team.

6100 Main, Houston, Texas 77005
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1892, Houston, Texas 77251-1892

© Copyright 2006 - Present Rice University
Maintained by: News & Media Relations - About this site