

2014 PLANET SCD creates friendly competition in Colorado

BY SARAH PFLEDDERER

Their wardrobes wavered from business casual to school spirit fanatical, which perhaps was a reflection of the students' differing outlooks on the event—one being that they were there to nab employment, and the other that they were attending with hopes to crush the competition.

Garb aside, the 800 students who attended the 38th annual Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) Student Career Days (SCD), held March 20-23 at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colo., had a devotion to the Green Industry. This fact was evident when the mass of students, comprised of 65 colleges and two high school FFA chapters, partook in the cheer contest at the opening ceremony.

Verses such as "Pour some soil on me" and "Who you gonna call?...Plantscapers!" bounced off the auditorium walls as horns, cowbells, guitars, harmonicas and drums added some accompaniment to the chants. But it was Iowa State University that received the first competitive award, the \$1,000 best cheer award from John Deere, for its remix to Sir Mix-A-Lot's lyrics "I like big butts," singing "I like big plants."

Students geared up for most of the competitive events March 20, attending workshops on their respective competitions or interests. Topics ranged from leadership to arboriculture and backhoe operation, to name a few, and those were held as part of the Career Development Series (CDS). The more CDS events students attended, the greater the opportunity for them to receive the CDS award at the closing ceremony March 23.

Also held at SCD was a PLANET Academic Excellence Foundation (AEF) ceremony on March 20, where scholarships, starting at \$1,000, were presenting to students from AEF ambassador companies. The presentation of the \$3,000 President's Scholarship rounded out the event. It was awarded to Jamie Helbig of Cincinnati State Technical and Community College.

It was the next morning, March 21, when SCD attendees piled into Fort Collins' Lincoln Center Theater for the opening ceremony. In addition to the cheer competition, Glenn Jacobsen, PLANET president and president of Jacobsen Landscape Design & Construction, unveiled the creation of the PLANET New Graduate membership. The membership offers discounts on training materials, a free resume-posting service and PLANET member rebates within the Green Industry.



The \$75 enrollment fee was knocked down to \$50 for students who enrolled at SCD, Jacobsen said.

Eric Schneider of Hunter hosts an irrigation workshop at SCD.

Also unveiled at the ceremony was the winner of the Husqvarna T-shirt design contest. The honor went to Amy Openshaw of Brigham Young University-Idaho (BYU-Idaho).

Midmorning, students were shuttled back to campus for a career fair, in which nearly 75 companies set up booths for—a 44 percent increase over last year. Additionally, the number of SCD sponsors nearly doubled this year.

And while the sun shined throughout the week, snow swung into Fort Collins just in time for the competitive events March 22. Landscape companies and manufacturer attendees sponsored the 28 events, which hit on job components such as compact excavator operation, irrigation troubleshooting, small engine repair and plant problem diagnosis.

BYU-Provo took first place in the overall competitive events, winning \$5,000 from STIHL. BYU-Idaho followed up in second, and Michigan State University stood in third. In the overall results for individual students, Hayden Angelotta of Cuyahoga Community College topped the list; Matt Case of Alamance Community College settled into second; and Jeff Elshoff of Michigan State University came in third.

The 2015 SCD will be held at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, N.C.

Visit buff.ly/1pGrm8v for an overview of the Come Alive Outside Design Challenge, which select schools participated in the day before SCD.