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Engineering Machine Design Contest Championship Showcases Student Innovation Across the Midwest

MANKATO, MN – The 2026 Engineering Machine Design Contest (EMDC) Championship, hosted at Minnesota State University, Mankato on April 17, brought together hundreds of student innovators from Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin for a full day of engineering, creativity, and competition.

The EMDC Championship represents the culmination of months of design, testing, and iteration, as middle and high school students constructed complex chain-reaction machines to complete a simple task through a series of interconnected steps. The event highlights applied learning in engineering, manufacturing, and the physical sciences while building critical skills in teamwork, problem-solving, and communication.

This year's theme, "**Engineering Across Eras: Innovating Industrial Engineering Through Time,**" challenged students to explore how engineering has evolved across historical periods. Teams incorporated elements from different eras—blending past innovations with modern technologies—to tell compelling engineering stories through their machine designs.

Throughout the day, teams participated in formal judging sessions, live demonstrations, and design reviews with industry professionals and educators. In addition to the traditional team-based competition, the inaugural **2x2 EMDC Challenge** introduced a new format for individuals and small teams, expanding access and participation in the program.

Students were evaluated across multiple categories, including:

- Machine design and functionality
- Engineering design process and documentation (Team Journal)
- Creativity and theme integration
- Presentation and communication with judges

Top-performing teams were recognized across Junior and Senior divisions, along with special awards highlighting excellence in innovation, design, and execution. Full results from the 2026 EMDC Championship can be found at:

<https://engineering.mnsu.edu/engineering-machine-design-contest/championship/2026-emdc-championship/>

Beyond competition, the event featured hands-on learning experiences, including:

- Engineering lab tours
- Interactive STEM activity tables hosted by university departments
- The Upper Story Game Zone, promoting logic and systems thinking through play
- Keynote sessions connecting engineering concepts to real-world applications

Since its inception, EMDC has engaged over 2,800 students across the region, providing meaningful, project-based learning experiences that connect classroom concepts to career pathways in engineering and advanced manufacturing. The program continues to play a critical role in strengthening the future workforce pipeline by fostering curiosity, confidence, and technical skill development in students.

The Minnesota State Engineering Center of Excellence extends its appreciation to participating schools, dedicated coaches, volunteer judges, industry partners, and sponsors who made the 2026 Championship possible.

For more information about EMDC and future events, visit:

<https://engineering.mnsu.edu/engineering-machine-design-contest/>