

# STUDENT INITIATIVES

## SAFETY INNOVATION BY STUDENT RECOGNIZED



In April, Minerva announced the winner of the 2008 James Ham Safe Design Award at the Industrial Accident Prevention Association's national Health and Safety Conference and Trade Show in Toronto. Congratulations to engineering undergraduate student **Mark Cicero** of the University of Western Ontario, who designed a safety management audit training database system that greatly assisted his summer employer in making employees more aware and responsive to workplace hazards.

The Award, which will become available nationally by 2010, honours Order of Canada recipient James Ham, whose Royal Commission Report on Health and Safety in 1975 led to the creation of Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and to the adoption of the Internal Responsibility System in Ontario workplaces. They challenge students and faculty members in Ontario engineering schools to:

- Suggest ways to improve the existing design of devices, processes or systems.
- Envision new, innovative designs that will eliminate or reduce potential hazards in the workplace.
- Create tools to help manufacturers and workplaces integrate safety into new or retrofit designs.

Mark received a plaque and a cheque for \$3,500 and also participated in the conference's Research Poster session, where he demonstrated the system.

*Minerva Update recently asked Mark to share his thoughts both about the award and about health and safety in university curricula.*

### **Q: How did it feel to receive this honour?**

**A:** It was amazing. Accepting the award at the IAPA conference was a great experience I was able to share with my family who were there.

### **Q: What sparked your interest in health and safety?**

**A:** Last summer while working at a drywall manufacturing plant updating its production database, I took a look at their existing safety audit database, which was not as efficient as it could be. By first linking it to a full database, I was able to improve the system quite a bit. From there, I really started thinking about the issue of safety in the workplace – something that people my age don't really do. It's unfortunate that it's not taught in the school system today. This award and attending the IAPA conference really opened my eyes to what the issues are out there.

### **Q: You participated in the poster session. What was that experience like?**

**A:** I found that very useful. The database I designed could be implemented at any company, and many attendees asked me how they could get something like it. For me, it was great exposure, and for others it demonstrated that young people are getting involved. I've been asked to come back next year and demonstrate it again.

### **Q: Do awards like this encourage students to focus on integrating safety into design?**

**A:** Absolutely. Incorporating H&S into the curriculum would be the best solution, but that's not always easy, so organizations like Minerva and companies that offer these one-time grants of money or recognition for something a student has done are to be applauded. I plan to meet with some of my professors next year and tell them about this award and how they can incorporate H&S into their classes.

### **Q: What would you add to the curriculum?**

**A:** A co-op experience is very useful because it's difficult to tell students about all the safety issues without on-the-job exposure. H&S starts from integrating it into a daily routine, and, as a student, you don't get that opportunity. Many people don't realize how much more efficient workers can be when they do not have to worry about an unsafe environment. One of your goals as an engineer is to increase efficiency, and H&S is one of the easiest ways to do it.

*Official entry forms and complete details for the 2009 James Ham Safe Design Award are available at [www.safetymanagementeducation.com](http://www.safetymanagementeducation.com).*



## A PROFESSOR'S PERSPECTIVE

"I believe that the James Ham Safe Design Competition is a tremendous activity. Just as engineering design competitions help promote strong design skills in engineering students, this competition fosters in students awareness and mastery of safety, health and environmental management. This knowledge is almost certain to reduce occupational illnesses and injuries through safe engineering design once these students graduate.

"The competition also encourages faculty to instill this value in all of their students, and encourages creative approaches. I know the team from my university that won second place in 2007 gained a broader appreciation of health and safety through their participation in the competition, and improved their overall engineering skills as a result."

**Marc Rosen, Professor, Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science, University of Ontario Institute of Technology**