The 2008-2009 concrete canoe season was a great success alongside another year of building on our knowledge. The team created some inventive and sustainable processes which was the theme of the concrete canoe competitions last year. Overall the canoe team finished in good standing placing higher at the National Competition than the previous year. There was a lot to be learned and gained from the second return to the National Competition, and the Regional Competition as well. The season was another landmark for SIUE Concrete Canoe team, and the team intends to continue with this improving trend.

The fall 2008 semester started out with early progress. Since our rules are not available until mid-September, the team got an early jump on decisions, schedules, and budgets. One of the main concepts was developed during this time, the theme of our concrete canoe. This is of vital importance because your theme is what the entire competition revolves around. It needs to be clear, inventive, and vivid. The canoe captains decided to call the concrete canoe “Moonrock”. This theme was developed through the canoe team’s sense of humor, along with NASA’s 50th year anniversary. The theme was excellent because the message was clear, and the team felt in sync with the theme because they had helped build the foundation for it.

Throughout the entire year the theme of sustainability echoed within the concrete canoe competition. SIUE Concrete Canoe team practiced this concept as much as we could within our budget and other constraints. One example was the canoe carrier that was designed and built, but not only was it a carrier it doubled as our curing tank. Before a canoe was poured the carrier had been covered in plywood to create a dunk tank with a table top that served as a pour area. Once the canoe was poured, then cured, it was ready to be dunked. We opened up the top of the tank and the canoe was submerged. Once our canoe was finished curing in the tank, the water was drained and the plywood was taken down – it was now our concrete canoe carrier. The other sustainable aspect to our carrier is it served as a practice project for the Steel Bridge team. The steel bridge team does their own fabrication and this served as good welding practice. The carrier did everything that it was intended to do; the canoe team was pleased with the idea of the sustainable canoe carrier.

Continuing with the theme of sustainability another example was once the canoe was extracted from the mold, the team then cut out part of the mold to be used for our cross section in the display. Instead of wasting more material on the construction of the cross section, we used an already existing piece of the mold. The team tried to keep in mind through this whole process the idea of reusing and recycling. This it was not only the theme of the concrete canoe competition this year, but is good practice in engineering as well.
Arriving in Carbondale, Illinois on April 16, 2009 the SIUE Concrete Canoe team with the canoe “Moonrock” were ready to show what we had been working hard on for the last year. The theme and display went well at the regional competition with our display winning first place. The canoe raced very well on the water, placing first in four out of five races which helped bring the team to the top. On April 18, 2009 the awards were announced and we received the first place ranking for the overall competition. This was very exciting for the canoe team because this meant a return to the national competition for the second year in a row. A more knowledgeable team from the trip to nationals in the 2007-2008 year, the team was again ready to compete at that level.

The canoe team was now ready to travel to Tuscaloosa, Alabama in June for the National Concrete Canoe Competition. It was a great experience for the team and there is always something to learn. The team’s national repeat was faced with new challenges and realizations. We placed one spot better than last year, which was an improvement, but there were some technical errors that could have been prevented. This entire trip was a learning experience and lessons were learned for next year. The team knows that there are a few things that stick out and need to be rehearsed before nationals next year. To point out a few: more rowing practice, the oral presentation should better prepared, and small technical errors in the final report should be addressed through editing sessions. Some things that went well were an improvement in rowing from the previous year. It is vital to have the high standings to really put a team ahead at the nation level. Also, our display was more aesthetically pleasing this year. We had a well organized theme, which helped the team to have a cleaner display. Overall, the SIUE Concrete Canoe team had a successful season. Returning to nationals was a good step in the right direction for our team. The coming year holds much promise due to the many new ideas and innovations in design and construction gained because of our experiences at the national competition, so no matter what happened we do not take that experience for granted. As always a huge thanks to everyone who helped on the road to nationals last season and the team is looking forward to another successful year in the 2009-2010 season.