The 2009-2010 concrete canoe competition season was largely a successful one for the SIUe team. The team was able to practice sustainability in our use of the previous year’s carrier, as well as the implementation of recycled aggregates as outlined by the ASCE guidelines. For the third straight year, SIUe represented the Mid-Continent Conference at the national competition.

The team began meeting at the beginning of the fall semester. It was around this time that the theme for this season’s canoe was developed. The theme for this year’s canoe celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Mississippi River Festival, which was actually hosted on our campus from 1969 to 1980. The team also wanted a canoe name that would relate the theme of the festival with the actual competition, and so “Rock N’ Row” was born. The captains (seniors Alex Benz and Jessica Schuerman) also began to create schedules so as to better utilize our time.

One of the new techniques we experimented with this year was the use of a female mold. In the past we had always used a male mold to form the canoe, however this year we decided that the female mold would make it easier to meet the required dimensions. In an effort to remain as sustainable as possible we reused the carrier from last year. The carrier also doubled as a curing tank frame, which also helped us to cut costs. Another way we practiced sustainability was to use part of the mold to cast the cross section needed for our display. This saved us from having to order more foam board, which saved both time and money. The team also worked to ensure that their rowing performance would have an impact at the competition.

We arrived at the Midcontinent Regional Conference (MCRC), hosted by University of Oklahoma in Norman, OK, on April 23, 2010, ready to showcase “Rock N’ Row”. The first day of competition was a great success for the team, as we placed first in both the display and presentation portions of the competition. On race day, the canoe performed exceptionally. We managed to win both of the men’s races along with the coed race. The women’s rowing team earned a second place finish in both of their races. These scores were enough to secure our team first place in the racing segment. The team’s design paper was earned a second place finish as well. The night of the awards banquet was a repeat of last year as the SIUe team took home the first place trophy and earned a berth in the 2010 National Concrete Canoe Competition (NCCC). The total budget to fabricate the canoe and travel to MCRC was about $4000.
With the regional victory in hand, the team was ready for the long trip to San Luis Obispo, California for the national competition at the 2010 National Concrete Canoe Competition. While in transport to nationals however, some of the supports in the carrier slipped, which ultimately led to the breaking of the canoe. Because of this, we were only able to send five members to the NCCC. It was decided that it would be in the best interest of the team to send one of the captains with the four younger members. This plan allowed for the returning members to experience the competition firsthand, and to bring back new ideas for the upcoming year’s canoe. While at NCCC, we were limited in what events we could compete in since we didn’t bring a canoe or an intact team for that matter. Our technical paper placed 14th out of 22 teams. We also gave the formal presentation as originally planned even though two of the original presenters were not there. This allowed the younger members to gain experience speaking in front of a large crowd. We were allowed to participate in the races using Cal Poly’s practice canoe, along with some of their female rowers. During the awards banquet, SIUE received its first trophy at the national level - the Spirit of Competition Award. The final cost for the team to participate at the 2010 NCCC was about $5500, a little less than half of what would have been required to transport the entire team and canoe needed for full participation.

The trip to the 2010 NCCC proved to be a very good learning experience for the team who brought back many ideas to help keep next year’s team competitive. At Nationals we learned some new rowing techniques that we intend to apply during the upcoming season. We also are planning on exploring the idea of using pre-stressed reinforcement. Although the season ended on a disappointing note, we can look back at the 2009-2010 season as a great learning experience, and as a stepping-stone to continued success.