

# Forest Products Participates in 56th Annual Southern Forestry Conclave at Auburn University

Nearly 300 students from 14 U.S. universities had the opportunity to take the controls of a Cat® Forest Machine (FM) Simulator at the recent Southern Forestry Conclave. The 56th annual conclave was held at Auburn University in Auburn, Ala. The goal of the three-day event was to promote cooperation and friendly competition among the schools and establish and maintain a high standard of ethics among students interested in forestry and professional foresters.

“Caterpillar’s participation in this annual event is just another example of our commitment to the forestry industry and the people who work in it,” said Robert Sanders, a Forest Products market development engineer who was one of Caterpillar’s representatives at the event. “These students represent the future of this industry, and educational opportunities like this help cultivate interest and the skills that are needed for this field.”

The simulator, which simulated a tracked log loader — a machine used for grabbing logs and moving them from one location to another — has been in use at Caterpillar for about six months and gives inexperienced operators a chance to learn how to use a Cat forest machine without actually being in a real-world setting.



“The simulator has the seat and controls of an actual FM machine with a large screen,” Sanders said. “Students really enjoyed using this tool and many of them came back to operate it several times.”

Local Cat dealer Thompson Tractor also participated in the conclave by bringing a wheel feller buncher, wheel skidder and knuckleboom loader on site for the students to see and learn about.

In addition to careers as machine operators, the students have a number of other options awaiting them after graduation.

“Many of these students plan to have a career in the forest industry,” said Tom Gallagher, associate professor of Forest Operations at Auburn University. “These careers include managing lands for big companies or small landowners (who own about 75 percent of the land in the southern United States), buying wood for pulpmills or sawmills, equipment sales, research positions and working for state or federal forest service agencies.”

The conclave also measured students’ technical and physical skills through a number of competitions. The technical events measured the skills that most foresters need to work in the woods, such as measuring trees, calculating the amount of land in a particular area and determining the amount and value of the trees on a property. The physical events offered students the chance to have some fun through archery, axe throwing, pole climbing, log chopping, log rolling and more.

Caterpillar’s presence at the conclave also gave participants exposure to Caterpillar’s role in the forestry industry and a close up look at the products we design and manufacture that they may operate some day.