Yes, you read it right — that was with an “o,” and not an “a.” The July event highlighted seven UC students from the E3 Program (Emerging Ethnic Engineers) and took place thanks to the generosity of Toyota Motor Engineering & Manufacturing North America, Inc. (TEMA).

“These students have been working hard with about 30 of our leading engineers for the past six months,” said James M. Wiseman, TEMA vice president for External Affairs.

The students’ goal was to transform a couple of very old, beaten-up Toyotas into race cars, for an endurance race called “The 24 Hours of LeMons.” They were not allowed to purchase either car for more than $500. One they purchased from Craigslist for $175 and the other they bought for $250.

“We have been emphasizing safety and endurance, so our main goal is to finish the race this year and then get better in the years ahead,” Wiseman said a few days before the race. “These cars really look like NASCAR, with big UC decals and the like.”

To read about the race in detail, visit http://www.24hoursoflemons.com/. There you will find such heartbreaking things as rule 1.6: “Your Car May Be Destroyed At Any Time: In addition to accidents and other unfortunate boo-boos, one car may be selected by blind ballot of all registered participants and Pit Pass holders for immediate removal and total destruction….. Don’t bring it if you ain’t OK with losing it.”

Wiseman assured UC President Nancy Zimpher at the send-off event that it was to be a team effort, with UC students helping on the pit crews.

“You will be excited with the cars, and you will also be excited to learn more about the growing collaboration between our folks and your students,” Wiseman concluded.

The race took place in South Carolina, with 92 teams entered. Although the students prepared the cars, the Toyota personnel did the driving. The commercials always did say “Once you get your hands on a Toyota, you’ll never let go.”