



From left: Allison Masikip, Emeline Lee, Terence Tien, Julia Soderstjerna. Photo credit: ©Disney Photo: Gary Krueger

Engineering Students Named Finalists in Walt Disney Design Competition

Imagine a place at UC San Diego where slides twist and turn around Torrey Pine trees, and suspension bridges tower over waterfalls. That is the design created by a team of UC San Diego engineering students competing in the 2017 Walt Disney Imagineering Imaginations Design Competition.

The team is one of just six finalists selected from a pool of more than 300 that entered the competition, which challenges students to apply the same design principles used in creating Disney's famous theme parks to develop new outdoor spaces at their own college or university.



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Fourth year mechanical engineering student Emeline Lee met two of her teammates at a study session. When the three of them learned they all shared the dream of becoming Disney Imagineers, they set out to find a fourth teammate to enter a competition for college students designed to help Walt Disney Imagineering identify talent.

“I’d had the goal of entering the Disney Imaginations competition since I was little,” said Julia Soderstjerna, a fourth year mechanical engineering major and theater minor. “I was fortunate enough to stumble upon these guys who were looking for a fourth teammate.”

With the team fully assembled, the Jacobs School of Engineering students set out to address this year’s challenge.

“We took field trips around La Jolla to see what we could incorporate in our design,” said Lee.



Rendering of Pacific Trove © Disney

The students designed Pacific Trove, an outdoor space that salutes the famed history and natural icons of La Jolla. The space won’t actually get built—the competition is designed to give college students the opportunity to showcase their skills and talents to Disney Imagineering through a multi-disciplinary project that combines engineering, innovation and technical skills with creativity and immersive story-telling.

Guests of Pacific Trove walk Torrey Pine Trails, which offers open, lofty hiking paths and suspension bridges to enjoy the natural breeze and breathtaking views.

“Our goal was to create an experience that would help guests rediscover their relationship with nature,” said Lee.

Garibaldi Grotto brings guests into a quiet and mystical space where they can find peace surrounded by tranquil aquariums and calming waterfalls. New Moon Beach allows guests to stroll along the coast or socialize near fire pits. On every new moon, guests can experience a lighting spectacle that brings the campus community together for a magical illumination of the space, which serves to remind guests of our intimate connection with our natural surroundings.

A panel of Imagineering judges will apply the same criteria to entries that they would to their own work—that includes the team’s ability to collaborate across different disciplines and backgrounds; mastery of individual skills; whether the project provides an engaging guest experience; the ability to tell a compelling and engaging story; and knowledge of and passion for the Disney brand and Walt Disney Imagineering.

As one of the six finalist teams, the Jacobs School engineering students receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Walt Disney Imagineering in California where they will present their projects to Imagineering executives and compete for monetary awards. Judging takes place this week.

“I think I speak for all of us when I say that we gained a group of friends,” said Lee. “Because of that, we’ve already won.”

The Pacific Trove team consists of Emeline Lee, Julia Soderstjerna, Terence Tien, and Allison Masikip.

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