



Illinois Students Named Champions in Unique National Competition that Demonstrates Importance of Math in Real Life

NEW YORK, NY (PRWEB) April 24, 2017 — Participation in a prestigious national math competition has added up to a first-place finish for five local high school students. The group of 11th-graders from Adlai E. Stevenson High School took home the top prize of \$20,000 in college scholarships in Moody's Mega Math (M³) Challenge. Albert Cao, Andrew Hwang, Deepak Moparthi, Joshua Yoon and Haoyang Yu were among 5,100 students -working in 1,100 teams – participating in the Challenge, which involved using mathematical modeling to recommend solutions for the future growth and sustainability of the U.S. National Park Service (NPS). A total of \$150,000 was up for grabs, divided among the finalist teams and top performers nationally.

The Lincolnshire students were found by a judging panel of more than 220 professional mathematicians to have come up with the overall best mathematical solution that addresses how the NPS can flourish in spite of global change factors expected to affect resources and visits at its 417 national sites country-wide. The students presented their findings at Moody's Corporation headquarters on Monday in the pinnacle contest event along with five other finalist teams.

Organized by the Philadelphia-based Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics (SIAM) and sponsored by The Moody's Foundation, M³ Challenge is designed to spotlight the relevancy and power of mathematics in solving real-world issues, as well as motivate students to consider further education and careers in math and science. Participants were given 14 consecutive hours during the last weekend of February to study the issue in question, collect data and devise models before uploading their solutions online.

"All of us were pretty new to math modeling so were really excited to get this opportunity to work together and collaborate for 14 hours," said Joshua Yoon from the champion team, which was coached by Paul Kim, a mathematics teacher at Adlai E. Stevenson High School. "It was just great working with this group of friends. We had so much fun and we are very honored and thankful for this."

"It's exciting to see the breadth of creative ideas that come out of these teams applying their math modeling skills to the very types of management challenges we in the National Park Service are working on," said Amanda Babson, Coastal Climate Adaptation Coordinator for the Northeast Region of the National Park Service, who was an honorary judge and luncheon speaker at the final event. "These students have a thoughtful understanding of the challenges of preserving park resources from sea level rise and climate change. I am truly inspired by this future generation."

First runners-up in the competition are Nihar Sheth, Harshal Sheth, Kartik Singh and Adithya Vellal from Westford Academy in Westford, MA, who split a \$15,000 scholarship prize. Third place winners are Daniel Bodea, Jamie Wang, Anshul Tusnial, Akhil Vaidya and Alex Hammond of Johns Creek High School in Alpharetta, GA, who shared \$10,000 in scholarship funds. Finalist teams from North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics in Durham, NC; High Technology High School in Lincroft, NJ; and Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, MD, received team scholarship prizes of \$5,000 each. (See link below for a full list of winners).

"We pose big messy problems about real issues that students may not know much about and that require them to make sense of it all by quantifying and organizing data, using skills they learned in math class – with the goal of solving something they never related to math before," said Michelle Montgomery, M³ Challenge Project Director at SIAM. "If students participate in this contest, see its value, get excited about what is possible when they have math skills, and realize the type of cool work and impact they might be able to have in their communities and even the larger world, then we have succeeded in our mission."



In addition to Babson, members of the final judging panel included professional mathematicians Karen Bliss (Virginia Military Institute), Kelly Black (University of Georgia, Athens), Dan Connors (IBM) and Honorary Judge Christopher Bergman, Associate Analyst, Moody's Investor Services. Bergman himself was a M³ Challenge finalist in 2009 and stood before a judge panel much like the one he was part of this year.

Prior to Monday's judging round, the more than 1,100 student submissions were assessed by 228 judges from across the country, who then narrowed down the entries to six finalists, six semi-finalists and 78 honorable mentions. In total, about eight percent of entrants were distinguished with scholarship prizes.

- » Read the Challenge [problem](#).
- » View the 2017 [winning solutions](#), where you'll also find a full list of winning teams.

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