

The Moody's Foundation Awards \$115,000 in Scholarships to the Moody's Mega Math Challenge

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On 26 April, The Moody's Foundation awarded \$115,000 in scholarships to the teams competing in the [Moody's Mega Math \(M³\) Challenge](#), the Foundation's signature project.

Now in its seventh year, the M³ Challenge spotlights applied mathematics as a powerful problem-solving tool, as a viable and exciting profession, and as a vital contributor to advances in an increasingly technical society. An Internet-based applied math contest administered by the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics (SIAM) for high school juniors and seniors, the M³ Challenge takes a timely and relevant real-world problem each year and challenges student teams to come up with the best solution. By connecting math to real issues, the contest teaches participants that with sufficient data and the application of analytical and critical-thinking skills, the power of mathematics and the objectivity of hard numbers can be used to solve almost anything.

The Challenge

The 2012 challenge, [Can High Speed Rail Get Back on Track?](#), asked students to identify and rank the best regions in the country for establishing high speed rail lines as part of a revived nationwide High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) network, an issue currently being debated in Congress. Participants were tasked with creating a mathematical model to determine the best regions in the country for establishing these rail lines. Regions were then ranked based on forecasted estimates of ridership numbers over the next 20 years, construction / infrastructure costs and maintenance, in addition to the effects such rail networks would have on American dependence on foreign energy.

The Contestants

More than 1,193 teams comprised of 5,400 students spread across 29 states virtually competed during the Challenge Weekend in early March. Working independently via the Internet, teams of 3-5 students had a mere 14 hours to study the issue, collect data and devise models before uploading their solutions in the form of a research paper. More than 100 Ph.D.-level mathematicians acting as judges evaluated all submissions in two selection rounds, narrowing the pool to the finalists, semi-finalists and honorable mentions. The Challenge culminated on 26 April when the top six teams presented their solutions to a panel of judges for the final evaluation and awarding of scholarships at Moody's NYC headquarters.

The Prizes

Prizes for the 2012 M³ Challenge were awarded as follows:

M³ CHALLENGE CHAMPIONS, SUMMA CUM LAUDE TEAM PRIZE OF \$20,000:

High Technology High School, Team #286, Lincroft, New Jersey; Coach: Ellen LeBlanc

Team members: Vineel Chakradhar, Stephen Guo, Daniel Takash, Angela Zhou, Kevin Zhou

M³ CHALLENGE FIRST RUNNER-UP, MAGNA CUM LAUDE TEAM PRIZE OF \$15,000:

NC School of Science and Mathematics, Team #808, Durham, North Carolina; Coach: Dan Teague

Team members: Connor Davis, Mia de los Reyes, Alyssa Ferris, Sam Magura, Vitichyr Pong



M³ CHALLENGE THIRD PLACE, CUM LAUDE TEAM PRIZE OF \$10,000:

Nashoba Regional High School, Team #548, Bolton, Massachusetts; Coach: Mary Redford

Team members: Madeline Jenkins, Samuel Kirschbaum, Joel Sharin, Steven Tang, Sorin Vatasoiu

M³ CHALLENGE FOURTH PLACE, MERITORIOUS TEAM PRIZE OF \$7,500:

Pine View School, Team #218, Osprey, Florida; Coach: Christine DeVeau

Team members: Patrick Braga, Andrew Foster, Anthony Grebe, Kevin Griffin, Alison Lui

M³ CHALLENGE FIFTH PLACE, EXEMPLARY TEAM PRIZE OF \$5,000:

Staples High School, Team #659, Westport, Connecticut; Coach: Gertrude Denton

Team members: David Haswell, Michael Menz, Pobert Perry, Matthew Silver, Constance Zhou

M³ CHALLENGE SIXTH PLACE, FIRST HONORABLE MENTION TEAM PRIZE OF \$2,500:

Hunterdon Central Regional High School, Team #202, Flemington, New Jersey; Coach: Eric Wasserman

Team members: Lindsay Gardner, Ankit Kayastha, Erik Larmore, Andrew Pellegrino, Steven Rofrano

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