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GEORGIA AND NORTH CAROLINA TEENS HONORED FOR RESEARCH IN BIOCHEMISTRY AND GENETICS IN NATION'S PREMIER HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE COMPETITION

Siemens Competition Regional Winners Announced at the Georgia Institute of Technology; Will Compete for \$100,000 at National Finals

James Meixiong of Evans, Georgia Wins Top Individual Prize; Sajith Wickramasekara of Raleigh, North Carolina and Andrew Guo of Cary, North Carolina Win Top Team Prize

ATLANTA, GA, Nov. 22, 2008 — Research projects in Biochemistry and Genetics boasted top marks this evening for James Meixiong and the team of Sajith Wickramasekara and Andrew Guo in the Region Six Finals of the 2008 Siemens Competition in Math, Science & Technology, the nation's premier high school science competition.

The Siemens Competition, a signature program of the Siemens Foundation, is administered by the College Board. Tonight's winners will receive thousands of dollars in college scholarships and be invited to compete at the National Finals in New York City, where the winners of six regional competitions across the United States will vie for scholarships ranging from \$10,000 to the top prize of \$100,000.

"These students have competed with some of the greatest young minds in our country, and are now on an amazing journey to the finals for the most coveted high school science prize in the nation," said James Whaley, President of the Siemens Foundation, based in Iselin, New Jersey. "The fact that we've experienced a record-setting year, including a 10 percent increase in both team and individual project submissions and more than a 16 percent increase in the number of registrations, makes their achievement even more commendable. We congratulate them on their hard work and look forward to welcoming them to the national event."

The students presented their research this weekend to a panel of judges from the Georgia Institute of Technology, host of the Siemens Competition Region Six Finals.

Individual Winner

James Meixiong, a senior at Lakeside High School in Evans, Georgia, won the individual category and a \$3,000 college scholarship for his biochemistry research that took several approaches to address how the structure of mitochondria influences the cellular levels of two proteins, Bax and Bak. His project is titled *Inhibition of Bax/Bak activation by mitochondrial fusion: a novel mechanism to block programmed cell death*.

“The long term goals of Mr. Meixiong’s research are to fully comprehend the complex integrated pathways that lead to apoptosis, or cell death, with the hope that a small molecule therapeutic could be designed to control apoptosis in diseased cells,” said Dr. Raquel Lieberman, Assistant Professor in the School of Chemistry and Biochemistry at the Georgia Institute of Technology. “Mr. Meixiong used three different and technically challenging approaches and drew responses consistent with his hypothesis in each case, ultimately creating a shift in the way we think about controlling cell death for diseases such as Parkinson’s, Muscular Dystrophy and Cancer.”

Mr. Meixiong is the Team Captain of his school’s Science Bowl and the Olympiad Team and also manages his school’s swim team. He won the Department of Energy’s Regional Science Bowl Competition in April 2008. Mr. Meixiong has won numerous medals at the State Science Olympiad Tournament, including a first place medal in Ecology. He heard about the Siemens Competition after a friend was named a Regional Finalist last year.

Mr. Meixiong is fluent in Chinese and is a member of a volunteer organization called Chinese School United Student Action. He spends his free time as a math tutor and a junior volunteer at the University Hospital of Augusta, Georgia. Both of his parents are research scientists at the Medical College of Georgia. His mentors for this project are Dr. Craig Brooks, Postdoctoral Fellow at the Medical College of Georgia and Dr. Zheng Dong, Professor at the Medical College of Georgia.

Team Winners

Sajith M. Wickramasekara and Andrew Y. Guo, both seniors at the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, Durham, North Carolina, won the team category and will share a \$6,000 scholarship for their research that has the potential to easily identify new chemotherapeutic drugs and greatly improve existing ones. The team’s project combined traditional genetics with cutting edge computational modeling to streamline the gene discovery process. Their project is titled, *A Functional Genomic Framework for Chemotherapeutic Drug Improvement and Identification*.

“Mr. Wickramasekara and Mr. Guo’s project was chosen because despite an enormous amount of research on cancer therapeutics, there is still a need to identify new genes to target for treatment,” said Dr. Kostas Konstantinidis, Assistant Professor in the School of Civil and Environmental Engineering and the school of Biology at the Georgia Institute of Technology. “Their approach has the potential to identify novel treatments that could lead the way to personalized medicine in the future. The team had exceptional communication and coordination in executing their project.”

Mr. Wickramasekara is the team leader and heard about the Siemens Competition in 2006 when seniors from his high school were selected as Regional Finalists. Mr. Wickramasekara is captain of his school’s Science Bowl and has participated in various science competitions including the 2008 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, the North Carolina State Science and Engineering Fair and the North Carolina Junior Science Humanities Symposium. He is an Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America and dreams of one day owning his own biotech startup, specializing in personalized medicine.

Mr. Wickramasekara and Mr. Guo co-founded the Student Journal of Research of the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics; they are also co-editors of the publication. Mr. Guo is a Science Olympiad winner and co-captain of the Quiz Bowl. He has received First Place State Team in the Goldman Sachs National Economics Challenge.

The team worked on this project with the help of their mentor, Dr. Craig B. Bennett, Assistant Professor, Duke University Medical Center in Durham, NC and their high school advisor, Dr. Myra Halpin, Dean of Science, North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, Durham, NC.

Regional Finalists

Regional Finalists each received a \$1,000 scholarship. In addition, the Siemens Foundation awards \$2,000 per project to the high school of every Regional Finalist.

Regional Finalists in the individual category were:

- Rohit Thummalapalli, American Heritage School, Plantation, FL
- Alexander M. Kim, Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, Alexandria, VA
- Agatha A. Cummings, Oak Ridge High School, Oak Ridge, TN
- Varun Bansal, Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, Alexandria, VA

Regional Finalists in the team category were:

- Jonathan Wang and Jared V. Goodman, Oak Hall School, Gainesville, FL
- Katherine S. Xue and Alborz Bejnood, Oak Ridge High School, Oak Ridge, TN
- Ruowan Yan and Melissa H. Hou, duPont Manual High School, Louisville, KY

The Siemens Competition

The Siemens Competition was launched in 1998 to recognize America's best and brightest math and science students. In another record-setting year, 1,893 students registered to enter the Siemens Competition with a total of 1,205 projects submitted – this includes an increase of more than 10 percent in team and individual project submissions and an increase of more than 16 percent in the number of registrations.

Entries are judged at the regional level by esteemed scientists at six leading research universities which host the regional competitions: California Institute of Technology; Carnegie Mellon University; Georgia Institute of Technology; Massachusetts Institute of Technology; University of Notre Dame; and The University of Texas at Austin.

Winners of the regional events are invited to compete at the National Finals at New York University in New York City, December 5 – December 8, 2008. Visit www.siemens-foundation.org on December 8, 2008 at 9:30 am EST to view a live webcast of the National Finalist Award Presentation.

About the Siemens Foundation

The Siemens Foundation provides more than \$7 million annually in support of educational initiatives in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math in the United States. Its signature programs, the Siemens Competition in Math, Science & Technology and Siemens Awards for Advanced Placement, reward exceptional achievement in science, math and technology. The newest program, The Siemens We Can Change the World Challenge, encourages K-12 students to develop innovative green solutions for environmental issues. By supporting outstanding students today, and recognizing the teachers and schools that inspire their excellence, the Foundation helps nurture tomorrow's scientists and engineers. The Foundation's mission is based on the culture of innovation, research and educational support that is the hallmark of Siemens' U.S. companies and its parent company, Siemens AG. For more information, visit www.siemens-foundation.org.

About The College Board

The College Board is a not-for-profit membership association whose mission is to connect students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the association is composed of more than 5,400 schools, colleges, universities, and other educational organizations. Each year, the College Board serves seven million students and their parents, 23,000 high schools, and 3,500 colleges through major programs and services in college admissions, guidance, assessment, financial aid, enrollment, and teaching and learning. Among its best-known programs are the SAT®, the PSAT/NMSQT®, and the Advanced Placement Program® (AP®). The College Board is committed to the principles of excellence and equity, and that commitment is embodied in all of its programs, services, activities, and concerns. For further information, visit www.collegeboard.com.

NOTE TO EDITORS: Broll and photos of winners available on request.

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