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The 30th Annual Supercomputing Challenge

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 was the culmination of the 30th Annual New Mexico Supercomputing Challenge, a year-long program for student teams to develop a computational science project. Professionals in the fields of computer science, science and mathematics met with student teams on Monday as they did live video conferencing presentations. Tuesday the teams participated in a virtual awards ceremony with Dr. Shaun Cooper, Computer Science Department at NMSU, as Master of Ceremonies. The recent event honored the hard work of the student teams from around New Mexico including schools as dispersed as Gadsden, Grady and Taos. This year the student projects had a wide variety of topics that ranged from A - V, artificial intelligence to vaccines. Volunteer mentors helped students develop their projects by guiding them in deepening their understanding of scientific concepts, learning programming techniques or strengthening research skills. This year's winning teams benefited from many mentors including: tech company employees, researchers at both Sandia and Los Alamos National Labs, fire and police departments as well as university faculty.

We are pleased to announce our winners below.

First Place

Rowan Jansens, Madelyn Kingston, Maya Landess, Brandon Morrison from New Mexico School for the Arts whose teacher is Mohit Dubey were awarded first place for their project "It's 'Bout To Get Lit Up In Here - Modeling Forest Fire Risks in Northern New Mexico". They were mentored by Stephen Guerin, founder of a tech company in Santa Fe and their teacher is an alumnus of Supercomputing Challenge, having participated when he was in high school. Their report is posted at https://supercomputingchallenge.org/19-20/finalreports/59/SCC_Final_Report.pdf They were also recognized for their professional presentations skills as they toggled between screens, videos and each other's computers while in separate locations.

Second Place

Lillian Petersen from Los Alamos High School took second place with her "Activity-by-Contact Model to Predict Enhancer-Gene Connections: A Tool to Increase our Understanding of Cancer" project. She models gene expression applying it to cancer research. Her excellent technical writing report at

https://supercomputingchallenge.org/19-20/finalreports/20/Supercomputing_Challenge_2020.pdf won her a writing award. She has been mentored by scientists at Los Alamos National Labs as well as Salk Institute. She is on her way to a bright future via Harvard.

Third Place

Cody Johnston, Elias Zheng, Lucas Ward, and Rio Sessions from Socorro High School took third place with their project “Project CO-OP: Computerized Officer Operations Placement”. Their teacher is Jay Garcia and their report is posted at https://supercomputingchallenge.org/19-20/finalreports/66/Team_66_Final_Report.pdf

Many teams had to persevere and overcome technology and connectivity barriers this Spring to finish their projects and we commend them for that. Final reports from all 36 teams that finished the Supercomputing Challenge are online.

<https://supercomputingchallenge.org/19-20/finalreports/submitted.php>

Scholarships and Other Awards

A complete list of all winning student teams is available at

<https://supercomputingchallenge.org/19-20/expo/AllWinnersList.pdf>

Scholarships worth almost \$20,000 were awarded to nine seniors at the Supercomputing Challenge Awards Ceremony Webinar. They were: Brendan Kuncel, Maximillian Montoya, Nefi Guevera Perez, Lillian Petersen, German Rojo, Gracie Sanchez, Charles Strauss, Oscar Sandoval Torres, and Jerrel White.

About the Supercomputing Challenge

“The Supercomputing Challenge has been instrumental in bringing computer science to our New Mexico students and schools. Over my years of involvement, I have seen students take on rigorous computational projects that come from their own interests, often working to solve issues in their communities. We have a strong connection with mentors from the research labs and the tech industry. The students that participate are prepared to be a part of this dynamic and growing part of our economy.” said Paige Prescott, Executive Director.

The New Mexico Supercomputing Challenge teaches written and oral communication, collaboration with peers and professionals, critical thinking including research and coding including computer modeling to middle and high school students throughout the state. Any New Mexico middle-school or high-school student, including home-schooled students are eligible to participate in the Supercomputing Challenge. Students follow their own interests to choose a topic to model.

Sponsors

The Supercomputing Challenge this year is mainly sponsored by:

- Los Alamos National Laboratory, Triad National Security, LLC

(Thom Mason, director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory gave a welcome/congratulations message to the webinar participants.)

- New Mexico Consortium, and
- National Science Foundation Space and Trustworthy Program.

A complete list of sponsors and supporters of the Challenge is on the website at <https://supercomputingchallenge.org/19-20/sponsors.php>

For more information about the Supercomputing Challenge, see <https://supercomputingchallenge.org>