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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**California and New York Students Capture $100,000 Scholarship Prizes in 2013 Siemens Competition in Math, Science & Technology**

**Eric Chen of San Diego, Calif., Wins $100,000 Individual Prize for Research on Anti-flu Medicine; Priyanka Wadgaonkar, Woodmere, N.Y., Zainab Mahmood, Hewlett, N.Y., and JiaWen Pei, Valley Stream, N.Y., Win $100,000 Team Prize for Research on Plants' Resistance to Ozone**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 10, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- One California student and three New York students were awarded grand prizes of $100,000 scholarships for their remarkable research in the [Siemens Competition in Math, Science & Technology](http://www.siemens-foundation.org/en/competition.htm%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), the nation's premier research competition for high school students. The students join a highly selective group of just 14 individual competitors and 14 teams previously named winners of the Siemens Competition.

Eric Chen, a senior at Canyon Crest Academy in San Diego, Calif., won the $100,000 Grand Prize in the Individual category for his discovery of potent influenza endonuclease inhibitors, which could be used to develop anti-flu drugs. Watch Eric [here](http://inr.synapticdigital.com/siemens/2013competition/?mclip=ff86110a-21f3-4911-802a-5f40cb1f4455&mstory=c24464f3-9456-4dd0-ac88-671be7ffda8f" \t "_blank).

Research on plants' resistance to ozone earned Priyanka Wadgaonkar, Woodmere, N.Y.; Zainab Mahmood, Hewlett, N.Y.; and JiaWen Pei, Valley Stream, N.Y. the shared $100,000 Grand Prize scholarship in the Team category. Watch Priyanka, Zainab and JiaWen [here](http://inr.synapticdigital.com/siemens/2013competition/?mclip=80c01bce-424a-47a9-81d1-7a7cda3f4de8&mstory=c24464f3-9456-4dd0-ac88-671be7ffda8f" \t "_blank).

The Siemens Competition is a signature program of the Siemens Foundation, a leading supporter of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education in the United States. The Competition is administered by the College Board. The fifteenth annual awards were presented this morning at The George Washington University, host of the 2013 Siemens Competition National Finals.

***Video, photos and bios are available at: [http://inr.synapticdigital.com/siemens/2013competition/](http://inr.synapticdigital.com/siemens/2013competition/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).***

"Congratulations to Eric, Priyanka, Zainab and JiaWen, this year's Siemens Competition winners, who have demonstrated incredible commitment to the advancement of science, math and technology," said David Etzwiler, CEO of the Siemens Foundation. "These students represent the future of our competitive global workforce and will propel our nation toward continued economic growth and success. We look forward to seeing their future accomplishments in college and beyond."

Twenty students comprised of six individuals and six teams competed at the National Finals this weekend after winning one of six regional competitions in November. They presented their research to a panel of judges comprised of nationally renowned scientists and mathematicians headed by lead judge Dr. Rachelle Heller, associate provost for academic affairs of the Mount Vernon Campus and professor of computer science at The George Washington University. The Siemens Competition $100,000 winners will ring The Closing Bell™ at the New York Stock Exchange on Wednesday, February 5th, 2014.

**The Winning Individual**

Eric Chen, a senior at Canyon Crest Academy in San Diego, Calif., won the individual category and a $100,000 college scholarship for his project titled *Discovery of Novel Influenza Endonuclease Inhibitors to Fight Flu Pandemic*.

For his project, Eric combined computer modeling with experimental research to discover influenza virus inhibitors. These findings could be used to develop new anti-flu drugs that will help protect people against future influenza outbreaks.

"Eric's outstanding interdisciplinary approach to research enabled him to identify several new candidate drugs for treating influenza," said Dr. Gary Benson, associate professor of bioinformatics at Boston University. "He combined computer modeling of molecules with essential lab experiments to quickly comb through more than 100,000 drugs to find the few with useful anti-influenza activity. His inventive and thorough work will help advance the search for drugs that could prevent the next flu pandemic."

Eric was inspired to pursue research on influenza after the swine flu outbreak started in his hometown of San Diego in 2009. Eric earned the Google Science Fair Grand Prize and was a finalist in the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair. He is the founder and head coach of a summer math contest program for middle school students and helped start Science Fair and Science Olympiad programs at his town's primary and middle schools. He plans to become a college professor or an entrepreneur.

Eric's project mentors were Dr. Rommie Amaro, assistant professor, and Dr. Gen-Sheng Feng, professor, both of the University of California, San Diego.

**The Winning Team**

Seniors Priyanka Wadgaonkar, Zainab Mahmood, and JiaWen Pei from George W. Hewlett High School, Hewlett, N.Y. will share a $100,000 scholarship for their project entitled *The Isolation and Characterization of an Ozone Responsive Stress Related Protein (OZS) in Ceratopteris richardii*.

The team characterized the "ozone responsive stress related protein" gene in a fern model system that confers protective resistance against ozone pollution. This gene occurred early in plant evolution, possibly to cope with the effects of environmental stressors on early plants. This gene has the potential to make important crops more resistant to ozone and other problems such as drought and soil salinity that produce crop damage that costs billions of dollars per year.

"This is among the finest independent research projects being conducted by students at the high school level in this country. These students exhibited remarkable levels of cooperation, dedication and passion to achieve such major biological findings," said Dr. Joy Ward, associate professor and Wohlgemuth Faculty Scholar in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Kansas. "Future applications of this important foundational research may add to our understanding of reducing the negative effects of ozone on crop production. The support from the Siemens Foundation for this competition will contribute immensely to the next generation of scientists and engineers that will solve fundamental problems that affect society today."

Priyanka's parents' work as a cell biologist and a gastroenterologist sparked her interest in science, as well as her aspiration to become an emergency room physician. She is a recipient of the George Eastman Young Leaders Award and chair of the Cabaret Night Business Committee.

Zainab is a member of the National Honor Society, a Euro Challenge Semifinalist, recipient of the United States Army Award, and the second-place winner of the Long Island Science and Engineering Fair. In her free time, she volunteers at the Franklin Early Childhood Center and plays Varsity Lacrosse. Zainab plans to pursue a career in engineering.

JiaWen has a longstanding interest in biomedical sciences and aspires to become a physician. Captain of her school's fencing team, she is also a member of the National Honor Society, Foreign Language Honor Society, chorus and orchestra.

The team's mentor is Dr. Terrence Bissoondial, a biological research teacher at George W. Hewlett High School. A 2010 Siemens Teachers as Researchers (STARs) fellow, Terrence also coached the 2012 Siemens Competition National Finals winning team, also from George W. Hewlett High School.

**National Finalists**

Six individuals and six teams competed at the Siemens Competition National Finals. The remaining National Finalists were awarded the following scholarships:

Individuals

* $50,000 scholarship – Arman Bilge, Lexington High School, Lexington, Mass. (Computer Science)
* $40,000 scholarship – Joshua Meier, Bergen County Academies, Hackensack, N.J. (Genetics)
* $30,000 scholarship – Gerald Meixiong, Lakeside High School, Evans, Ga. (Biochemistry)
* $20,000 scholarship – Ivan Paskov, Edgemont Junior/Senior High School, Scarsdale, N.Y. (Computer Science)
* $10,000 scholarship – Frederick Lang, St. John's School, Houston, Texas (Biology)

Teams

* $50,000 scholarship – Noah Golowich, Lexington High School, Lexington, Mass.; and Kavish Gandhi, Newton North High School, Newton, Mass. (Mathematics)
* $40,000 scholarship – Andrew Jin and Steven Wang, The Harker School, San Jose, Calif. (Biochemistry)
* $30,000 scholarship – Aaron Argyres, Clayton High School, Clayton, Mo.; and Mingu Kim, David H. Hickman High School, Columbia, Mo. (Bioengineering)
* $20,000 scholarship – David Lu, Mills E. Godwin High School, Henrico, Va.; and Allen and Jason Lee, Millburn High School, Millburn, N.J. (Biochemistry)
* $10,000 scholarship – Alyssa Chen, Highland Park High School, Dallas, Texas; and Shriya Das, The Hockaday School, Dallas, Texas (Materials Science/Nanoscience)

**The Siemens Competition**Launched in 1998, the Siemens Competition is the nation's premier science research competition for high school students. A record 2,440 students registered for this year's competition and a total of 1,599 projects were submitted for consideration. Three hundred thirty-one students were named Semifinalists, 100 were named Regional Finalists, and 20 were named National Finalists. Entries are judged at the regional level by esteemed scientists at six leading research universities which host the regional competitions: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, California Institute of Technology, Carnegie Mellon University, Georgia Institute of Technology, University of Notre Dame and The University of Texas at Austin.

For news and announcements about the Regional Competitions and the National Finals, follow us on Twitter [@SFoundation](https://twitter.com/sfoundation%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) (#SiemensComp) and like us on Facebook at [Siemens Foundation](https://www.facebook.com/SiemensFoundation%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank). A webcast of the National Finalist Awards Presentation will also be available online at 9:30am EST on December 10: [www.siemens-foundation.org](http://www.siemens-foundation.org/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

**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 mathematics (STEM) in the United States. Its signature programs include the Siemens Competition in Math, Science & Technology,  a STEM research competition for high school students, Siemens We Can Change the World Challenge, a sustainability challenge which encourages K-12 students to develop innovative green solutions for environmental issues and the Siemens STEM Academy, a national educator professional development program designed to support educators in their efforts to foster student achievement in STEM fields. By supporting outstanding students and educators today, and recognizing the mentors and schools that inspire STEM educational 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. For further information, visit [www.siemens-foundation.org](http://www.siemens-foundation.org/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) or follow [@sfoundation](https://twitter.com/sfoundation%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

**The College Board**The College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, the membership association is made up of more than 5,900 of the world's leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, the College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success — including the SAT® and the Advanced Placement Program®. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators and schools. For further information, visit [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

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