

Delaware Finalists Advance to National High School Biotechnology Research Competition

Newark, Del. (May 30, 2012) – Two students have been selected to represent the state of Delaware in the U.S. National BioGENEius Challenge, a scientific research competition for high school students. Lieutenant Governor Matt Denn made the announcement today at an event to celebrate the accomplishments of the students and their teachers. University of Delaware President Patrick Harker and Kelvin Lee, director of the [Delaware Biotechnology Institute](#), also spoke at the event.

Priyen Patel (17), a junior from Sussex Technical High School, was chosen for his project on the effects beta-methylamino-L-alanine (BMAA), a non-essential amino acid naturally produced by cyanobacterial algal blooms, on human neuroblastoma cells. Achille Tenkiang (16), a junior from the Charter School of Wilmington, was selected for his research on the components necessary for creating enzymatic biofuel cells.

“I am honored to celebrate these students and their achievements today,” said Lt. Governor Denn. “Thank you to Dr. Lee and the Delaware Biotechnology Institute for providing this forum and this opportunity. These are some of the brightest young minds we have and I look forward to watching them continue to excel.”

Patel and Tenkiang were selected from among the winners of the New Castle County Science Expo, the Kent County Science Fair and the Sussex County Science Fair. The local-level finalists included Achille Tenkiang and Emma Barnes from the Charter School of Wilmington; Gopika Lakshmanan and William McCabe from Indian River High School; Bansri Patel, Priyen Patel and Melissa Schoonfield from Sussex Central High School; and, Jamie Weber from the Tall Oaks Classical School.

After the awards ceremony, the students were given a personalized tour of UD’s teaching and research areas, including the CAVE – a 3D imaging facility, the [Bioimaging Lab](#) and the [DNA Sequencing & Genotyping Lab](#).

“I congratulate the BioGENEius finalists for their hard work and discoveries,” said Harker. “UD is proud to help organize the Challenge – proud to be a part of Delaware’s incredibly strong tradition of scientific innovation and to help cultivate the next generation of scientific leaders. The University is home to some truly groundbreaking scientific research – from a Nobel-winning discovery that enabled modern DNA sequencing to novel methods for making biofuels from sustainable agriculture – and we hope many of the BioGENEius finalists will choose to take their prodigious talent to UD.”

The two Delaware finalists will receive an all-expense paid trip to compete at the U.S. National BioGENEius Challenge in Boston on June 18. Ten U.S. National finalists will be selected to join students from Canada and Australia to compete in the international competition at the [2012 Biotechnology Industry Organization \(BIO\) International Convention](#), the largest global event for the biotechnology

industry with approximately 16,000 attendees each year. Representatives from the [Delaware Economic Development Office](#) and the state's biotechnology industry will be attending the convention. Winners of the competition will be announced at the convention's June 19 keynote luncheon.

At the Local, U.S. National and International competitions, students are evaluated on the quality of their research and display, as well as on their responses to questions relating to their scientific knowledge and potential commercial applications of their research.

"The Delaware Biotechnology Institute is excited to partner with bioscience companies to encourage interest in science," said Lee. "The students' hard work and talents really shine through in their research projects and demonstrate a lot of promise for our future in Delaware."

The Delaware competition is sponsored by AstraZeneca, Gore, QPS, Siemens, DuPont and the DBI faculty and staff. Sanofi Pasteur, the vaccines division of global pharmaceutical company Sanofi and Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson, are the lead sponsors of the U.S. National BioGENEius Challenge.

The International BioGENEius Challenge is organized by the Biotechnology Institute, the national organization dedicated to biotechnology education. The first-place winner will receive \$7,500; second place will receive \$5,000; third place will receive \$2,500 and fourth place will receive \$1,000. Each remaining participant will receive an honorable mention award and \$500. Click [here](#) to read past BioGENEius Challenge participant testimonials.

Images are available upon request.

About the Delaware Economic Development Office

The Delaware Economic Development Office is an executive state agency responsible for attracting new investors and businesses to the state, promoting the expansion of existing industry, assisting small and minority-owned businesses, promoting and developing tourism and creating new and improved employment opportunities for all citizens of the State. Follow DEDO on Facebook or Twitter @DEDOgov.

About the Delaware Biotechnology Institute

The Delaware Biotechnology Institute is a partnership among government, academia and industry to help establish the First State as a center of excellence in biotechnology and the life sciences. The Institute mission is to facilitate a biotechnology network of people and facilities to enhance existing academic and private-sector research, catalyze unique cross-disciplinary research and education initiatives, and to foster the entrepreneurship that creates high-quality jobs.

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