

NEWS RELEASE

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Students in Guelph and Toronto win first Laurier Science Challenge *Ontario's only comprehensive science exam tests well beyond what's taught in high-school*

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WATERLOO (Ont.) – Students from high schools in Guelph and Toronto have emerged as the clear winners of Ontario's only comprehensive science challenge.

David Zhang, a student at Centennial Collegiate and Vocational Institute in Guelph, has captured first place in the Laurier Science Challenge. The Grade 11 student scored 46.5 out of a possible 60 marks (or 77.5 percent). Schoolmate Lisa Jones, also in Grade 11, finished fifth with a score of 39.5 (65.8 per cent).

Centennial also ranked second in the team division with a combined score of 176.5 out of a possible 300. Team scores are determined by adding together a school's top five scores.

Students from University of Toronto Schools formed the winning team with a combined score of 200 and three Grade 12 students finished among the top individuals. Bikram Sidhu finished in second place with 44 (73.3 per cent), Ray Guo took third with 42.5 (70.8 per cent) and Aaron Smith finished fourth with 40 (66.7 per cent).

"Students at both Centennial and UTS wrote very strong tests," said Sheila McKee-Protopapas, program co-ordinator for the Laurier Science Challenge. "Both schools distinguished themselves by producing the best results in a competition designed to identify students with the interest and aptitude necessary to excel in university-level sciences."

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Launched this year, the Laurier Science Challenge is the only comprehensive test of science aptitude. The questions were designed by science professors at Wilfrid Laurier University to challenge beyond what's covered in Ontario's curriculum. The challenge organizers expect that the top performers pursue their interest in the sciences outside of the classroom, perhaps reading science publications and participating in science fairs.

The two-part examination tests students' knowledge and problem-solving skills in biology, chemistry, kinesiology, mathematics, physics and psychology. Students answer a series of multiple-choice questions in the six disciplines and choose three of six essay questions.

"This exam is not designed to test knowledge of the curriculum – not Ontario's or any other," explained McKee-Protopapas. "It's designed to recognize the very strongest performers and give them a hint of what could be expected if they decide to pursue an education in the sciences."

Forty schools and 292 students in the second-to-last year of high school participated in the challenge. Due to the elimination of Grade 13, 210 students wrote while in grade 11 and 69 while in Grade 12 (12 students didn't indicate their grade and one is in grade 10).

The challenge offers more than \$10,000 in individual and team cash awards and scholarships to students who demonstrate advanced aptitude in the sciences. As the first-place winner, Zhang has won \$500 and a \$5,000 scholarship to study in any program offered by Laurier's faculty of science. Sidhu's second-place finish earns \$250 and a \$2500 scholarship, while the third to 10th place participants will each receive a \$100 award.

Centennial, UTS, Colonel By Secondary School in Gloucester, Crescent School in Willowdale and T.A. Blakelock in Oakville each receive a \$200 prize and a plaque for finishing with the top five team scores. Team standings are determined by adding the scores from each school's top five participants.

Laurier plans to again offer the provincial competition next year and hopes to grow it into a national competition in the next year or so.