University of Lethbridge News Release

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Lethbridge high school iGEM team wins award at first competition

Students from Lethbridge high schools showcased their Ctrl-Salt-Del synthetic biology project

The University of Lethbridge high school International Genetically Engineered Machine (iGEM) team came away with the Best Opportunity Analysis award and an $1,800 travel bursary after competing at their first geekStarter jamboree in Canmore on May 26 and 27. The team earned the award for analyzing previous work done by iGEM teams and learning from its limitations.

“The jamboree was really great. We got to meet other teams and learn about their projects,” says Michelle Wu, a Grade 10 student. “We also got good feedback on our project that will help with the next steps.”

The team, made up of 16 students from Winston Churchill, Lethbridge Collegiate Institute, Chinook and Catholic Central high schools, chose a project that will use synthetic biology to remove salt and metal ion contaminants from water. Their goal is to create a more cost effective and energy efficient method for desalination and recovery of heavy and precious metals from effluent water. They hope the technology they develop could one day be integrated into existing water treatment infrastructure. More information on the project can be found online at BioTreks.

The team will continue working on their Control-Salt-Delete project over the next few months in preparation for the annual iGEM Giant Jamboree in October at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, where they’ll join teams from all over the world for five days of competition.

This news release can be found online at U of L high school iGEM team.

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ABOUT geekStarter:
geekStarter engages students in finding and solving authentic problems, and building solutions based in emerging Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. The project-based learning experience culminates in inspiring community events and prestigious international competitions, where students share their research and innovations with other young scientists as well as with leaders in STEM. Through emphasis on multi-media presentations and networking, these events provide students with opportunities to celebrate their successes and build a community of peers across Alberta and the world.

ABOUT iGEM:
iGEM, the International Genetically Engineered Machine Competition, is the largest synthetic biology community and the premiere synthetic biology competition for both university and high school level students. iGEM inspires learning and innovation in synthetic biology through education, competition and by maintaining an open library of standard biological parts, the Registry of Standard Biological Parts.

Combining molecular biology techniques with engineering concepts, students work in interdisciplinary team to create novel biological systems. At the beginning of the competition season, each registered team is given a kit of 1000+ standard interchangeable parts called BioBricks from the Registry of Standard Biological Parts. Working at their own schools, teams use these parts and new parts of their own design to build, test, and characterize genetically engineered systems and operate them in living cells in an effort to address real-world issues. Along with submitting their newly created BioBricks to the Registry of Standard Biological Parts, teams are required to actively consider the safety implications of their work and document their projects on team wiki pages. At the end of the competition season, teams converge at the Jamboree event to showcase their research. Teams present their work through posters and oral presentations, and compete for prizes and awards, such as the coveted BioBrick trophy.

For more information about iGEM, visit http://igem.org/Main_Page.