

Ochoa, Fondren, Chapin, and Smith Take Prizes in 15th Annual McGraw-Hill Poster Contest



Photo Courtesy of Mandy Smith

On 5 May, for the fifteenth time, community judges and NTCC students converged on the foyer of the Whatley Center for the Performing Arts at NTCC for an annual McGraw-Hill Poster Contest. The scholarly competition was enabled again by generous grants, from **Beverly Kelley** of Mount Vernon, and the **McGraw-Hill** Education Corporation—through the special work of **Bill Welsh**, and **Casey Slaght** who work in the corporate office in Dubuque, Iowa.

Unlike last year's very close, and compacted scoring, this year's contest saw more extremes in both directions. The winners attained anomalously high scores. They were a full two points higher than that accorded to winners in the virtual contest of 2020 during the COVID lockdown. Even the fifth-place presenter, Presidential Scholar, **Neida Perez**, would have won the contest last year. In first, Presidential Scholar, **Alyssa Breann Ochoa** wowed the judges with a 11.6 average score. As twelve indicates a score of outstanding in every category, this was the most notable performance since 2018, when the scoring system was changed to help prevent ties. Ochoa, a personable former NTCC soccer team player from Bastrop, was

on target, having presented this work three previous times in the spring semester. She argued that Texas' innate advantages in the realm of the dairy business, have been obscured in history by environmental factors which have been solved. Blue Northerners, Texas ticks, arsenic dipping vats, and even droughts no longer impede the dairy business as they once did. Ochoa's presentation is also now attached to the NTCC honors website at: <https://www.ntcc.edu/academics/honors-northeast/northeast-texas-art-scholarship/vodcasts-northeast-texas>.



Ochoa During Poster Contest. Photo Courtesy of Mandy Smith

Skylar Fondren, recent winner of a Coca Cola Gold, nationally, and last year's winner, took second place. Currently the college's Texas Heritage National Bank Scholar, she treated the theme of autism and music. Fondren argued that not only do autistic individuals have special talents and abilities with music, such as a stronger tendency to have perfect pitch, but that musical therapy tends to be more efficacious with autistic individuals. The college's Russell-Mowery Scholar, Jordan Chapin, came in third. A recent recipient of the highly prestigious Phi Theta Kappa All-USA Team award, she presented work performed last summer as part of her research fellowship at Texas A&M, Commerce. Her poster concerned hydrogenation--reactions occurring with molecular hydrogen--of unsaturated carbonyl compounds in water. In fourth, Presidential Scholar, Maddy Smith, recent winner of the Chitsey Award, noted

relationships between owning pets and insomnia. In her sample, pet-owning correlated positively with less insomnia.

The particular élan of the contest, and the opportunities presented for student growth arise each year because of the quality of the judges. This year, ***Andrea Reyes*** of Hughes Springs again served as adjudicator and judge. ***Dr. Elaine Beason, Jerry Hearron, Dr. Mary Hearron, NTCC Trustee--Chuck Johns, Melody Mott, Jerald and Mary Lou Mowery, Dr. Maryna Otero, Dr. Wayne Renning, Heather Shaw*** each gave multiple students a chance to demonstrate the viability of their ideas. Only three of the judges served in this same capacity last year, and NTCC is thus beholden to a much larger set of interested patrons who help to vivify this contest every year. Some of the judges this year, notably NTCC Honors alumna, and mother of four from Hughes Springs, ***Andrea Reyes***, and the retired Lutheran pastor with a doctorate in theology and an engineering degree, ***Rev. Dr. Wayne Renning***, from Mount Pleasant, have served as judge of the contest over ten times.

Dr. Karyn Skaar, the NTCC Honors Psychology professor, led the event. Among her innovations this year was the effort to time and stagger the judges more evenly. ***Dr. Andrew Yox***, Honors Director, was in Nebraska during the contest attending the graduation of his daughter.

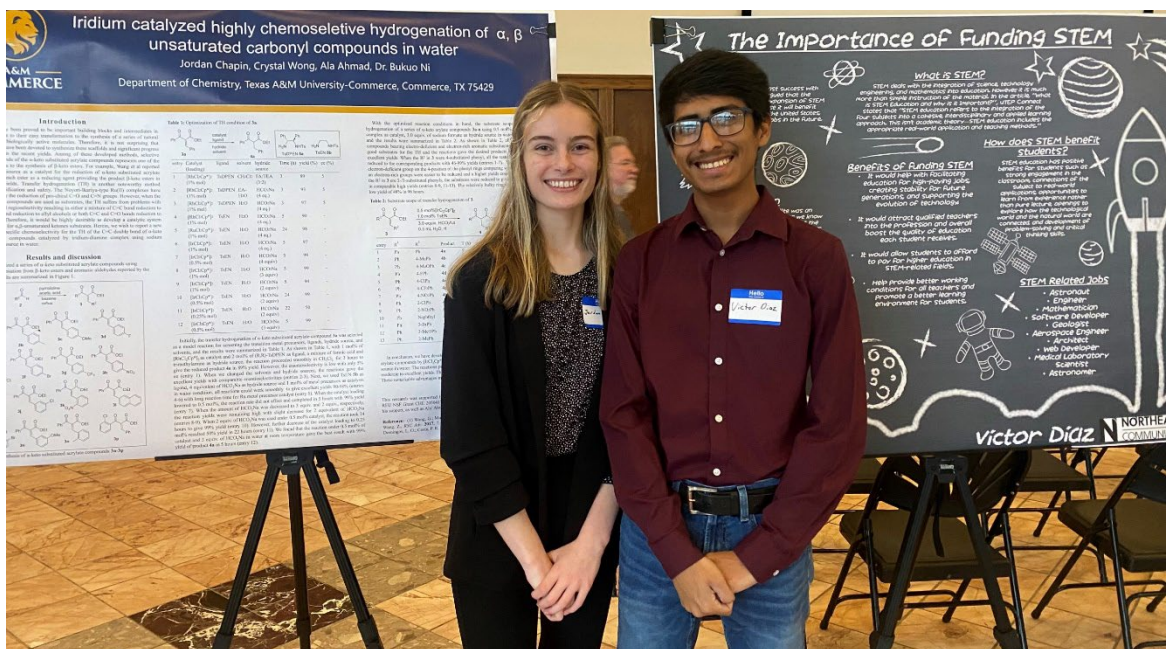
The contest each year is open to all high school and collegiate students in the region. This year again, Presidential Scholars, the highest tier of *Honors Northeast*, dominated the winner's circle. But there was a significant input this year from Harts Bluff High School standouts, led by NTCC's director of the English honorary society, Sigma Kappa Delta, ***Jennifer Sparks***. All of the student participants were distinctive in the sense that they had not only mastered a field of erudition, but had a creative idea of their own to present through research. This list of participating scholars included: ***Bianca Aguillon, Michelle Calderon, Fernanda Aleman, Victor Diaz, Haley Lewis, Luke McCraw, Victoria Matiz, Neida Perez, Sam Pollan, Solveig Strottman, Lilianna Torreblanca, and Aubrey Watkins.***\



Participating Scholars Above: Photo Courtesy of Mandy Smith



Judge Jerry Hearron, and 2nd Place Skylar Fondren: Photo Courtesy of Mandy Smith



The "STEM Corner." Third Place Jordan Chapin with Whatley Scholar, Victor Diaz: Photo Courtesy of Mandy Smith



Dr. Elaine Beason, and 4th Place, Maddy Smith: Photo Courtesy of Mandy Smith