

Secondary school students representing the four provinces of Ireland participated in the Final of the Debating Science Issues (DSI) competition on 14 April 2011 at the Science Gallery in Trinity College Dublin. After several closely contested debates between schools from Leinster, Ulster, Munster and Connacht, St. Vincent's Secondary School of Dundalk, Co. Dublin emerged as the All-Ireland winners. The All-Ireland Final revolved around the motion that 'Animal testing is necessary for the advancement of disease treatment.' Other finalists included St. Catherine's Vocational School, Killybegs, Co. Donegal, Coláiste an Phiarsaigh, Glanmire, Co. Cork, and St. Joseph's College Garbally, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway.

the DSI judging panel commented, "Science Foundation Ireland recognizes how Debating Science Issues (DSI) has been instrumental in engaging young people in science education, and in encouraging them to consider thematic areas that are highly topical, controversial and relevant to present day society. DSI is part of a larger programme of outreach initiatives which can reveal to students career opportunities that exist in science and engineering and how by being a part of a skilled workforce, the vital role they can play in shaping Ireland's future economic success."

Other judges at the DSI Finals include REMEDI's Director Professor Tim O'Brien, Dr. Diarmuid O'Brien Executive Director at CRANN at Trinity College, Editor for the Irish Medical News Danielle Barron, Dr. Louise Mylotte, Lecturer in Biology and Contemporary Issues in Science and Technology at St. Angela's College, Sligo, Geneticist and Professor Gerry McKenna, former Vice Chancellor at the University of Ulster, Dr. Amy Sanders, Project Manager of Special Projects at the Wellcome Trust, Professor Tom Sherry of the Department of Mathematical Physics and Dean of the College of Science at NUI



Dr. Marion Boland, Scientific Programme Manager of the Life Science Directorate at Science Foundation Ireland, a member of



Galway and Prof. Orla Sheils, Associate Professor of Molecular Pathology and Lecturer in Medical Jurisprudence in Histopathology at Trinity College Dublin.

All students, teachers, judges and research and discovery centres involved deserve a sincere thank you for making this worthwhile competition an All-Ireland success for science. Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre, Biomedical Diagnostics Institute, Clarity CRANN, Regenerative Medicine Institute, Royal College of Surgeons Ireland, Tyndall National Institute, W5 Interactive Discovery Centre Belfast wish to acknowledge that DSI would not have been possible without the generous funding and support of the Wellcome Trust's People Award.

The Wellcome Trust is an independent charity funding research to improve human and animal health. Established in 1936 and with an endowment of around £13 billion, it is the UK's largest non-governmental source of funds for biomedical research.



DEBATING SCIENCE ISSUES

September 2011

"DSI developed a great buzz in the classroom, the students are now asking more and more questions on and off the topics that we are covering in class!"

Leinster Teacher

Open to senior cycle students in secondary school across Ireland and Northern Ireland, Debating Science Issues (DSI) is a great opportunity for students to expand and hone their communication, research and scientific skills. As a precursor to the debate competition, each school involved avails of a 3-hour workshop on one of the five debate topics: genetically modified foods, health & self testing kits, stem cell research, nanotechnology and immunology practices. The bioethical workshop kick-starts the research and prepares the students for the first round of debates. From there the debating motions circulate so that all students debate on and learn an array of controversial, topical science issues.

DSI is a dynamic debating competition inviting young people to engage in discussion and debate on the cultural, societal and ethical implications of advances in biomedical science. Funded by the Wellcome Trust, the debating competition is coordinated by REMEDI, the Regenerative Medicine Institute, a Science Foundation Ireland and industry-funded research centre located at NUI Galway, in conjunction with seven science research and discovery centres throughout Ireland and Northern Ireland. Provincial prizes were sponsored by Boston Scientific and the National University of Ireland Galway's College of Science. In 2011, over 550 students at more than forty schools across 15 counties engaged in biomedical workshops. Three hundred fifty students went on to form debate teams and compete. Contingent upon funding, this cross-border project will be expanded to incorporate more schools, students and geographic regions for 2011- 2014. We hope to add a new partner too, the Centre for Cross Border Studies in Armagh.



Connacht

The Western region was co-ordinated by REMEDI, a Science Foundation Ireland and industry-funded research centre located at NUI Galway. Scientists and doctors at REMEDI are working together combining the technologies of gene therapy and adult stem cell therapy to repair and replace tissues damaged by diabetes, heart disease, arthritis and neurological disease.

The Connacht region geographically expanded with a wide delivery of biomedical, bioethical workshops to include schools in Counties Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo and Donegal this year which started during National Science Week, November 2010. A cross-curricular approach to debate preparation was employed in many of the schools involved. English, drama and science teachers worked together to develop scientific knowledge and to enhance communication skills in their students.

REMEDI sincerely thanks all of the teachers and judges involved in the Connacht provincial heats. Congratulations and job well-done to Fr. Iomar Daniels and his Transition Year students at St. Joseph's College Garbally, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway. They won three provincial heats debating the procurement and use of embryonic stem cells, self-testing is the future for health management, and genetically modified foods' benefits to human health. Connacht runners-up were Magh Ene College in Bundoran. Also, thanks to Gairmscoil na Píarsach, Rosmuc, Salerno Secondary School, Salthill, Davitt College, Castlebar, Presentation College, Currylea Tuam, Abbey Community School, Boyle and Ursuline College, Sligo Town.

For information for schools in Connacht contact:
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Munster

The Munster Regional section of DSI was coordinated by the Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre (APC) and Tyndall National Institute, University College Cork. Schools received a three hour workshop in preparation for the first round of the competition. This year the APC delivered workshops about Genetically Modified Food to Ballincollig Community School, Carrigtwohill Community School, Clonakilty Community College, Glanmire Community College, North Presentation Secondary School, Regina Mundi College, Sacred Heart Secondary School, Clonakilty and St Vincent's Secondary School. Tyndall delivered workshops on Nanotechnology to Coláiste an Phiarsaigh, Glanmire, Presentation Secondary School, Ballingarry, Mount Mercy College and St Mary's Secondary School, Macroom.

Coláiste an Phiarsaigh, Glanmire emerged as winners of the Munster Regional Final of Debating Science Issues at The Lifetime Lab, Lee Road, Cork on March 23rd. Clonakilty Community College battled it out with Coláiste an Phiarsaigh, Glanmire in a close debate. However, the confident team from Coláiste an Phiarsaigh persuaded the panel of judges, which included scientists and a journalist, that "the procurement and use of embryonic stem cells for scientific research is unethical".

Participating teacher Sian Joyce from Coláiste an Phiarsaigh said of the initiative "It is a fantastic opportunity to discover the many facets to a career in science whilst also introducing the students to valuable skills such as public speaking and scientific research methods".

Munster has a strong record in the national finals with students from St Mary's Secondary School, Macroom, having won the national final of the competition in 2009 and Ballincollig Community School winning the first national final of the competition in 2008.



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Ulster

The 2010/11 term for the Debating Science Issues programme saw a dramatic expansion in the geographical area represented from within the province of Ulster. This year, teams hailed from Antrim, Cavan, Donegal, Down and Monaghan. The Ulster regional heats were held in W5 in Belfast, with teams travelling up to 130 miles to compete. Competition was fierce as the schools from all over the province began debating. The teams this year varied greatly in experience, although passion for each topic and a desire to win were easy to see in every student. The winners of each of the heats returned to W5 a short time later for the provincial finals which were held at the end of March.

The level of involvement by all teams in the Ulster region was to be highly commended and it was obvious to all involved that pupils had invested large amounts of time researching the various contentious topics chosen for debate. Many different styles of debate were employed by the pupils from sections of highly emotive, fist-clenching speeches; to sections of very factual, well-cited material.

The regional final in W5 came down to a round of very close scoring between St. Colmcille's High School, Crossgar and St. Catherine's Vocational School, Killybegs. The judges ultimately awarded the regional honours to St. Catherine's Vocational School who went on to represent the Ulster at the All-Ireland Final.

W5 extends thanks and congratulations to all the teams involved, teachers and pupils alike, in this year's debating programme. The effort, skill and time invested in preparing and debating is greatly valued and should be applauded. A special mention must be made of the girls from St. Catherine's who performed so well throughout the competition. Hopefully this will inspire other schools from the province to become involved in the programme and bring the trophy home for next year!

For information for schools in Ulster contact:
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Leinster

2011 was finally Leinster's year with St. Vincent's Secondary School, Dundalk taking home the top prize after a captivating final debate. DSI Leinster is coordinated by staff from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), Biomedical Diagnostics Institute (BDI) at Dublin City University, CLARITY at University College Dublin and CRANN at Trinity College Dublin. Workshops on topics ranging from Vaccinations, Health & Self Testing to Nanotechnology were provided for students from the participating sixteen Leinster schools.

This year RCSI staff delivered workshops on vaccinations to Presentation College, Warrenmount; Mercy Secondary School, Goldenbridge; CBS Westland Row and Loreto College, Crumlin Road. CRANN delivered workshops on Nanotechnology to St. Andrew's College, Booterstown; Loreto College, St Stephen's Green; St Vincent's Secondary School, Dundalk; St Kilian's German School, Clonskeagh. BDI ran workshops on Health & Self Testing with Confey College, Leixlip; Pipers Hill, Naas; Muckross Park Donnybrook & Ardscoil La Salle, Raheny. And finally CLARITY's schools were De La Salle Presentation School, Bagenalstown, Co Carlow; De La Salle School, Churchtown; Mount Anville School; and Eureka School, Kells, Co. Meath.

The Leinster Final took place at DCU in March where St Vincent's Secondary School, Dundalk battled it out with Ardscoil La Salle, Raheny. The Dundalk team emerged as the winners and went on to the grand final of the competition where they debated successfully against the formidable Munster finalists Coláiste an Phiarsaigh, Glanmire.

The Leinster based institutions involved would like to congratulate all the schools who took part, including their teachers, for their commitment and enthusiasm. A final thank you goes to the judges who took time out from their busy schedules to take part in these debates.



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