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Inside ExploreLI

TOP STORIES

Siemens dropping academic contest

■ **Foundation says** it will move to other programs

■ **LI trio final winners** of 19-year math, science event

BY CANDICE FERRETTE
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The Siemens Competition in Math, Science & Technology — the prestigious national contest that has awarded millions of dollars in college scholarships to thousands of budding teenage researchers — is ending after 19 years, its sponsors have announced.

The decision means that the competition's 2017 event, in which three Half Hollow Hills high school juniors took home the grand prize of \$100,000 in December, was the last of its kind, according to a statement posted on the website of the Siemens Foundation, based in Iselin, New Jersey. The announcement was made public on Thursday.

"I feel badly that it's ending. We would have hoped other students would have had just as great of an opportunity," Jiachen Lee, one of that trio of students, said Monday in an interview. "It was extremely fun to just talk about the project over these last few weeks. That's what counted most — just having the experience of working with my partners to develop it."

Lee said Siemens officials contacted her Thursday, saying the competition would end and providing arrangements for the scholarship money won by her and her teammates, Arooba Ahmed and Jillian Parker.

Foundation officials, in their statement, pointed to "the growing momentum around workforce development, including through career and technical education, apprenticeships," that do not require a four-year college degree. New programs will



Jillian Parker, left, Arooba Ahmed and Jiachen Lee celebrate after winning the 2017 competition.

be announced later this year, according to the statement.

There were no details Monday on how exactly the foundation plans to shift its focus from the competition to other opportunities for young people. A Siemens Foundation spokeswoman referred Newsday to the website's FAQ.

"Over the last few years we've taken a close look at changes in the U.S. and the people, programs and expertise we have to address those needs and we've adjusted our investments accordingly," Siemens Foundation chief executive David Etzwiler said in a statement. "Addressing inequalities in economic opportunity and the vanishing middle-class of America is an area where we believe we can be a part of the solution."

The Siemens program invited high school students across the country to submit original research projects in math, science and technology for the opportunity to win college scholarships

ranging from \$1,000 to \$100,000. Students could compete as individuals or as members of a team.

The foundation, part of the Siemens Corporation, said more than \$10 million in scholarships was given out over the years. The number of students submitting projects during that time topped 28,000, and more than 1,600 of them won scholarships.

At Stony Brook University, where hundreds of students have been mentored for the Siemens and other science competitions over the years, professors were puzzled as to why the program was ending.

"We are a little bit confused. We don't know why they are ending it. This came so suddenly," said Miriam Rafailovich, distinguished professor in the Department of Materials Science and Chemical Engineering.

Rafailovich noted the loss of the Siemens Competition money to the schools. SBU doesn't receive money from Siemens or the high schools, but

mentors the students and enables them to have research opportunities.

Lee and Ahmed, both of Half Hollow Hills High School East, and Parker, of Half Hollow Hills High School West, all 16, traveled to Washington, D.C., in December for the national finals.

Their research into cell division that could help find treatments to cancers, viruses and other diseases bested 12 other projects in the team category. The three were among 101 regional finalists — 11 of whom hailed from Nassau and Suffolk — in the most recent contest.

The competition, a signature program of the Siemens Foundation, was administered by the College Board until 2013, and by Discovery Education from 2014 through 2017.

New York ranked third nationally in the number of students who were named regional finalists and national finalists, behind top-ranked North Carolina and California.

EVEYIN HOCKSTEIN

INSIDE

Actor John Mahoney, 77, best known for 'Frasier,' dies A34

