

## Local high school senior named one of the top math/science students in the nation

For the third time in the last five years, an Alachua County Public School student has been named one of the top math/science students in the country.

The Society for Science and the Public has announced that Helena Jiang from Buchholz High School is one of just forty finalists in the 2020 Regeneron Science Talent Search. The Search was established in 1942, making it the nation's oldest and most prestigious science and math competitions for high school seniors. Past winners of the competition have gone on to win the Nobel Prize, the National Medal of Science, even an Academy Award.



Nearly 2000 students from across the country entered this year's competition. Earlier this month 300 of them were chosen as semifinalists, including Jiang and seniors Brindhya Rathinasabapathi and Himanshi Verma from Eastside High School. All three won cash prizes for themselves and their schools. As a finalist, Jiang has won an additional prize of at least \$25,000.

She has also qualified for trip to Washington, D.C. in early March, where she and her fellow-finalists will present their projects to a panel of judges. They'll also be mingling with leading scientists and members of the U.S. Congress and displaying their projects to the public. The finalists will be competing for more than \$1.8 million in awards.

Jiang was recognized for her project 'Novel Bioinspired Colorimetric Sensors for Detecting Chemicals in Vapor, Liquid and Solid Phases.' The project previously earned her a grand award in the 2019 Florida Science and Engineering Fair. It then took a Best of Category prize at the International Science and Engineering Fair, winning first place in Chemistry division and placing among the top 22 projects in all subjects for the entire competition.

Jiang has earned other international honors for her work. Last summer she was one of only 80 high school juniors from around the world accepted into the Research Science Institute (RSI) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a prestigious program during which she took college level courses, conducted research with MIT professors and presented the results of that work.

"I'm definitely looking forward to getting the chance to talk with judges and experts in the field," said Jiang. "But what I'm looking forward to the most is getting to meet all the new talented finalists and catch up with all my old friends from past science fairs or from the RSI summer program."

Jiang's selection continues the district's tradition of success in the rigorous competition. In 2018 BHS senior Sidhika Balachandar was a finalist, while Beverly Ge, also of Buchholz, was a 2016 finalist.

"This is an amazing accomplishment," said Superintendent Karen Clarke. "Our students continue to show that they can compete with anyone, anywhere in the world."

"This year's finalists are part of the next generation of brilliant minds who – through the pursuit of science and innovation – can address many of society's most urgent challenges and help improve our world," said George D. Yancopoulos, M.D., Ph.D., Co-founder, President and Chief Scientific Officer of Regeneron.

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