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DOE science competition at Oak Ridge National Laboratory boasts top student winners

Oak Ridge, Tenn., Nov. 10, 2009 -- Six top national science students, including one grand prize winner, have been named at the U.S. Department of Energy's second annual Science and Energy Research Challenge – SERCh, at Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

Cynthia Chen, of Albuquerque, N.M., and a student at the University of Texas at Austin, was awarded a science scholarship of \$10,000 as the grand prize winner of the national poster competition held November 8-9.

Chen's research poster, titled "Enhanced Thermopower in PbSe polymer Nanocomposites," shows how automotive waste heat can be converted into electricity. Competing in the energy category.

Chen attributed her successful entry to help from researchers at the University of California, Berkeley and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, and said she plans to continue her research in this field and pursue graduate school.

This year's SERCh event include 97 top undergraduate research students from colleges and universities throughout the country. Most projects focused on energy solutions, with competition categories in computational science, energy, engineering, environmental science, life science and physical science. The students presented abstracts, posters, and oral presentations detailing high level research they completed as DOE undergraduate interns.

"This event was a clear demonstration of the extraordinary science and engineering talent that exists in our undergraduate colleges and universities across the nation," said Jim Roberto, ORNL director of Strategic Capabilities. "We congratulate the winners and all participants for their research accomplishments, and we look to them as future science and technology leaders."

First-place winners in those categories each took home \$3,000 scholarships. The winners include: Stuart Slattery, computational science; Cameron Tracy, engineering; Hefei Li, environmental science; Kristen Meyer, life science; and Sidney Wilkerson-Hill, physical science. Second-place winners were awarded scholarships of \$1,500 and third prize winners received \$1,000 scholarships.

The Science and Energy Research Challenge is part of DOE's ongoing educational outreach efforts to encourage students to pursue careers in STEM – science, technology, engineering and math -- areas.