The Collegiate Inventors Competition: Encouraging Graduate Education through Awards and Recognition

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The Collegiate Inventors Competition (CIC), a program of the National Inventors Hall of Fame Foundation (NIHFF), annually awards individual students or teams for innovative work and scientific achievement. The CIC recognizes individuals in undergraduate and graduate programs whose research, discoveries and inventions are original and have the potential to receive patent protection. While the focus is clearly on students, the CIC also seeks to encourage and recognize the working relationship between students and their faculty advisors.

The CIC allows students to receive recognition beyond regular academic circles and provides financial support that can be difficult to pursue when involved with rigorous and demanding schedules. In addition, finalists of the CIC have the experience of presenting to a renowned panel of judges, most of whom are inductees to the National Inventors Hall of Fame. Past inductee judges include Robert Bower (self-aligned gate MOSFET), Edith Flanigen (molecular sieves), Jim Hillier (electron microscope) Marcian “Ted” Hoff (microprocessor), Don Keck (optical fiber), Gerhard Sessler (electret microphone), George Smith (CCD—charge-coupled device), Rangaswamy Srinivasan (excimer laser surgery) and James West (electret microphone). Special guest judges selected by the presenting sponsors, the United States Patent and Trademark Office and the Abbott Fund, also participate in the final phase of judging.

Through the annual Competition, the NIHFF hopes to continuously encourage, recognize and inspire outstanding student innovators in their pursuits of special research interests and advanced courses of graduate study.