

## **'48-Hour Challenge' ends in a tie**

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Alfred University's Institute for Science, Mathematics and Technology Education issued a high-stakes challenge to top high school students: Figure out the solution to a mystery in 48 hours, and win \$5,000. But at the end of the 48 hours, a mystery remained. Two teams finished with identical scores. The judges' solution: Award both teams the top prizes. Irondequoit High School near Rochester, NY, and another from Dryden Central School, near Ithaca, NY, each won a total of \$5,000 - \$500 to each of the five team members and \$2,500 to their high school. Members of the Dryden team were David Drew, Chris Ezell, Dennis Prentice, Tom Walker and Ryan Mott. They were advised by Mary Kay Hickey. Irondequoit team members were Robert Lower, Brian Kraftschik, Brad Damtoft, Andrew Middleton and Tom Weaver, with Bruce Lower as the advisor. Third-place winner was the team from South Side High School in Rockville Centre on Long Island. Members were Ryan Wolff, David Randell, Matt Davis, Eileen Strong and Patrick Rein. Advisor was Kimberly Weinreich. Each team member received \$100, and the school, \$1,000. Eleven teams participated in the first-ever competition, sponsored by Erick Laine, chairman of the board of Alcas Corporation in Olean, NY, and a member of the AU Board of Trustees. An engineer himself, Laine wanted to stimulate high school students' interest in the fields of science, math and engineering. Laine said he sponsored the competition "to energize students, to get them interested in studying things they maybe hadn't thought about studying before." Alfred University's School of Engineering has top-rated programs in ceramic engineering and glass science engineering, as well as materials science, biomedical materials engineering science, electrical engineering and mechanical engineering, but few high school students are aware of what a ceramic engineer, glass scientist or materials scientist does. Through the competition, Laine said, he wanted to heighten students' awareness of those fields and the technology they've generated - everything from fiber optics and glass patches for broken bones, to computer chips and space shuttle tiles. "You're important," Laine told the participants. "Our nation needs as many engineers, technicians and scientists as we can possibly get if we are going to remain competitive. They are the ones who are solving problems, creating solutions, and taking on challenges." The competition actually began last fall, with a website that provided monthly clues about how to solve the problem, using a variety of analytical equipment available at the University, explained Dr. David G. Toot, director of the AU Institute for Science, Mathematics and Technology Education, as well as associate professor of physics and director of the Stull Observatory. Once teams - each comprised of five students and an advisor - had registered, they were given a password that would give them access to the site. Some of the clues included descriptions of some of the analytical equipment that will be available to students, from equipment for ion chromatography to a scanning electron microscope, and mass and infrared spectrometers, and what kinds of information it can provide to the competitors. The problem was developed by a team of faculty "masterminds," who also posted the clues.