



DEBATING SCIENCE ISSUES

Leinster School scoops Debating Science Issues All-Ireland Finals

St. Vincent's Secondary School, Dundalk, Co. Louth were declared the **All-Ireland winners of Debating Science Issues (DSI) 2011**. The grand final which took place at the Science Gallery at Trinity College Dublin on April 14th last was the result of a field of 56 schools narrowing to just four. In a confident display, the team from Dundalk successfully persuaded Professor Tom Sherry, Dean of Science at the National University of Ireland Galway, Dr. Amy Sanders, Wellcome Trust Special Projects Manager, and Professor Orla Sheils, Lecturer in Pathology and Medical Jurisprudence at Trinity College Dublin, that *“animal testing is necessary for the advancement of disease treatment”*. **Colaiste an Phiarsaigh of Glanmire, Co. Cork** were the **Runners up** at the Final. Ulster was represented by **St. Catherine's Vocational School, Killybegs, Co. Donegal** and Connacht by **St. Joseph's College, Garbally, Co. Galway**.

Debating Science Issues is a cross-border schools science debating competition supported by a Wellcome Trust People Award for four consecutive years and involves 8 collaborative partners: the **Regenerative Medicine Institute (REMEDI) at NUI Galway, W5 in Belfast, Biomedical Diagnostics Institute (BDI) at DCU, the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland, CRANN at TCD, CLARITY at UCD, Tyndall National Institute and Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre both at UCC**. Co-ordinated by REMEDI's Outreach Officer Danielle Nicholson, the competition encourages young people to engage in debate on the cultural, societal and ethical implications of advances in biomedical science. Schools taking part initially receive a 3-hour biomedical, bioethical workshop to facilitate discussion on the ethical issues raised by stem cell research, genetically modified food, nanotechnology, health and self-testing kits or flu vaccinations. School students research further in preparation for the debate motion related to the initial workshop. From there, the debate motions circulate so that students debate on an array of controversial topical issues. Boston Scientific and NUI Galway's College of Science sponsored the provincial trophies and prizes.

Other judges at the DSI grand final included **Director of REMEDI, Professor Tim O' Brien, Danielle Barron, Editor of the Irish Medical News, Dr. Diarmuid O' Brien, Executive Director of CRANN at Trinity College, former Vice Chancellor of the University of Ulster Professor Gerry McKenna, Dr. Louise Mylotte Lecturer in Biology at St. Angela's College, Sligo and Dr. Marion Boland, Scientific Programme Manager at Science Foundation Ireland.**

“Debating Science Issues tackles many of the prevailing big scientific, philosophical dilemmas. Students discussed the methods of science and utilitarianism and debated the moral status of the embryo; I was impressed.” remarked Danielle Nicholson of REMEDI. The Connacht team mentor and teacher Fr. Iomar Daniels from Garbally College said of the initiative *“DSI has shown the students the importance and relevance of science and how it permeates the entire fabric of our society.”*

For further information on DSI please contact Danielle.nicholson@nuigalway.ie