

Alabama students have a blast testing their knowledge at Rocket City Quiz Bowl tournament

By Robin Osborne, AIAA GHS Associate Fellow and STEM Committee Member

Photo credit: Kelby Starchman, AIAA GHS Pre-College Outreach Director

Instead of “Houston, we have a problem,” it was “Huntsville, we have some questions,” as over 100 high school students from across the state traveled to compete in the 2025 AIAA Rocket City Quiz Bowl tournament at the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) on Saturday, Feb. 1. Twenty-two teams competed for trophies along with 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th place cash prizes of \$1000, \$750, \$500, and \$250, which teams will use to fund their travel to national tournaments in Chicago and Atlanta.

The eight teams that qualified for playoffs were, in alphabetical order: Alabama School of Cyber Technology and Engineering (ASCTE), Bob Jones High School, Gadsden City High School, Grissom High School, Hewitt-Trussville High School, Hoover High School, Oak Mountain High School, and West Point High School. The playoffs were seeded based on the results of the preliminary games and consisted of quarter-finals, semi-finals, and double-elimination finals. The winning teams are pictured below.



1st Place Team (\$1000 cash prize):

ASCITE (Huntsville, AL)

Pictured with Coach Peter Speak



2nd Place Team (\$750 cash prize):

Hoover High School (Hoover, AL)

Pictured with Coaches Tim Caine and Austin Dennis



4th Place Team (\$250 cash prize):

Gadsden City High School (Gadsden City, AL)

Pictured with Coaches Wayne Davenport and Shila Miller, and
AIAA GHS Treasurer Joe Bullington

Photo credit: Indu Prasad



3rd Place Team (\$500 cash prize):

West Point High School (Cullman, AL)

Pictured with Coach Lee Henry and AIAA GHS Treasurer
Joe Bullington

Clockwise from top left: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th place team winners of the Rocket City Invitational.

Students with the top 10 highest individual scores in the preliminary rounds received individual medals. Those students, recognized as the tournament All-Star Team, are pictured below.



The top individual scorers were, in order of placement, Tate Osborne of ASCTE (MVP), Krish Nathan of Hoover, Brodie Henry of West Point, Chris Holder of Gadsden City, Steven Pan of Bob Jones, Grant Vice of Southside, Louis Johnson of Bob Jones, Latika Prasad of Gadsden City, Sean Harbison of West Point, Brandon Cui of Oak Mountain, and Damien Tompkins (not pictured) of Russellville.

The tournament questions covered the disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), as well as other areas such as history, government, literature, fine arts, current events, and pop culture. Teams competed by answering tossup and bonus questions related to those subjects. Quiz bowl is akin to Jeopardy! for students. The questions, provided by the National Academic Quiz Tournaments (NAQT), are complex and advanced for students' current grade levels. The full results for this year's Rocket City Invitational are officially recorded on these websites:

<http://www.naqt.com/go/stats/15941> and <https://hsquizbowl.org/db/tournaments/8981>

The event was hosted jointly by AIAA GHS and the AIAA UAH Student Branch. All trophies and cash awards were made possible through the generous sponsorships of Amentum Space Exploration Division and National Space Club – Huntsville. The UAH Admissions Office supported the event by covering the rental fee for Chan Auditorium.

Tournament volunteers included members of AIAA GHS and the UAH AIAA Student Branch, as well as volunteers from National Space Club – Huntsville, NASA Marshall Space Flight Center, Amentum Space Exploration Division, Axient, Sev1Tech, TriVector Services, CACI, AI Signal Research, City of Huntsville, University of Alabama at Huntsville, East Tennessee Quiz Bowl, Hoover High School, and the Alabama School of Cyber Technology & Engineering. Laura Morgan, a long-time volunteer for the Alabama Scholastic Competition Association (ASCA), did an impeccable job moderating in every round, including finals. Dren Rollins, executive director of East Tennessee Quizbowl, served as remote tournament judge. Gabe Xu, professor of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at UAH and sponsor for the AIAA UAH Student Branch, served as a moderator and was instrumental in helping reserve classrooms for the event.

Thank you to all 39 volunteers (listed in alphabetical order): Rob Adams, Ella Archer, Ameya Arun, Alexander Boyd, Jeremy Buckley, Joe Bullington, Chelsi Cassilly, John Dankanich, Caleb Ethridge, Lauren Fisher, Marissa Garcia, Jeff Haars, Braeden Hayes, Ava Hewlett, Matthew Hitt, Matthew Koebbe, Sophia Liu, Steven Liu, Samantha Marcella, Bonni Rae McKinney, Tina Melton, Laura Morgan, Behrokh Nazeri, Jennifer Nelson, Robin Osborne, Ashley Penton, Tracie Prater, Jason Pullias, Ananth Reddy, Dren Rollins, Carolyn Russell, Thein Shi, Kelby Starchman, Naveen Vetcha, Kerri Watson, Molly Watts, Maria Whitehurst, Thor Wilson, and Gabe Xu.

In addition to bringing the students together with members of the Huntsville aerospace community, the tournament provided an opportunity to remind those planning to major in STEM fields related to aeronautics or astronautics to apply for AIAA GHS's [Robert L. Sackheim Engineering, Science, & Math Scholarship](#) and also take advantage of AIAA's free [high school student membership](#).



