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For Immediate Release

2026 Savannah River Regional Science Bowl

Challenging America's brightest in one of the most prestigious academic science competitions

AIKEN, S.C. (March 10, 2026) – The pursuit of scientific excellence and the development of a highly skilled workforce converged at the annual U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Savannah River Regional Science Bowl®, hosted at the University of South Carolina Aiken by Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) Education Outreach Program. The regional event, which drew 16 teams from South Carolina and the greater Augusta, Georgia, area on Feb. 21, showcased the impeccable talent of 76 students from 11 high schools competing in a fast-paced, academically rigorous competition.

Lakeside High School Team 1 Steven Zhang, Eliana Benevides, Arnav Patel, Kareem Hassan and David Wang earned an all-expense-paid trip to the national U.S. Department of Energy Science Bowl in Washington, D.C.

This year's winners, Lakeside High School Team 1 from Evans, Georgia, carried home more than just the victory, earning an all-expense-paid trip to the National Science Bowl® in Washington, D.C., from April 30-May 4, 2026. Notable finishers also included Davidson Fine Arts Magnet School in second place and Dorman High in third.

The Regional Science Bowl represents an incubator for the next generation of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) leaders who are essential to the success of broader DOE and National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) missions. The rapid-fire questions are rooted in biology, chemistry, Earth science, space science, physics, and energy. Many questions directly align with real-world challenges and workforce needs across the Complex.

"Competitions like this do far more than test academic skill," said Cindy Hewitt, SRNS Education Outreach Specialist. "Science Bowl is an investment in our future workforce. It creates an enduring love for STEM disciplines and introduces students to mission-critical work at the Savannah River Site [SRS], energizing and equipping competitors with the skills they need to join our workforce when the time is right."

SRS is one of only three DOE sites participating annually at the regional level since the program's inception in 1991. This year's contest was only made possible through the efforts of over 50 volunteers from multiple Site contractors. Among those volunteers were Sara Bowles and Matthew Jenkins, both SRS engineers, who share unique connections to the competition, having once been regional competitors themselves.

"I volunteer in honor of my late teacher, Ms. Rebecca Potter, who left a lasting impact on my life through her teaching and our intense Science Bowl preparations," said Bowles, SRNS Design Authority Engineer. "Ms. Potter's guidance and passion for STEM not only helped me succeed in the competition but also inspired me to pursue a STEM degree. Volunteering here each year is my way of keeping her legacy alive and reliving the incredible memories from that time in my life."

Robert Lascola, Savannah River National Laboratory Advisory Scientist, and Brandon Watts, SRNS Process Engineer, volunteer as moderator and question judge during the competition.

She continued, "In this competition, students make real connections between academic concepts and their practical applications in the world. A good portion of the questions reference DOE Labs, Plants, and Sites, showing students the relevance of what they're learning."

Jenkins, SRNS Nuclear Safety Engineer, participated in the competition during his junior and senior year of high school. "This competition gave me a head start in learning advanced STEM topics, especially chemistry and physics, which prepared me for the challenges of pursuing a STEM degree at Georgia Tech. The ability to think critically under pressure is something I've carried with me into my role today. Opportunities like this lay the foundation for well-prepared, highly skilled talent to meet DOE and NNSA mission priorities."

The tournament style competition continues even for teams that do not advance in the double-elimination rounds. The eliminated teams are invited to participate in brain teaser activities, hosted by the American Chemical Society providing engaging and educational experiences for all participants.

To reach the National Science Bowl®, teams from across the U.S. must win one of 65 regional tournaments. More than 350,000 students have faced off in the National Science Bowl® finals throughout its 35-year history.

"I've had the incredible opportunity to go to nationals three times," explained Arnav Patel, a sophomore on Lakeside High School Team 1 who has been a competitor since seventh grade. "Each time, I've met so many like-minded people, and the connections you build go beyond just science—in many ways, they help you grow as a person and broaden your perspectives. You're exchanging ideas, learning from others, and improving yourself. It's opened doors for me in terms of confidence and future career opportunities."

David Arrington, coach of Lakeside High School Team 1, added, "Science Bowl brings a competitive edge to education while fostering both teamwork and a personal love for STEM. Many of our students leave the competition with confidence and curiosity, ready to enter college-level STEM programs. Science Bowl ultimately create lifelong learners who are ready to support industries like those found at SRS."

Click here for more information about DOE's National Science Bowl®.

Lakeside High School Team 1 David Wang and Arnav Patel face off with Davidson Fine Arts Magnet School Ariel Lee during the final round of the DOE Savannah River Regional Science Bowl competition.

2026 Savannah River Regional Science Bowl Teams
(Each school may enter multiple teams)

School	*Location*
A.R. Johnson Magnet	Augusta, Georgia
Augusta Preparatory Day	Martinez, Georgia
Chapin High	Chapin, South Carolina
Davidson Fine Arts Magnet	Augusta, Georgia
Dorman High	Roebuck, South Carolina
D.W. Daniel High	Central, South Carolina
Greenbrier High	Evans, Georgia
Lakeside High	Evans, Georgia
Lexington High	Lexington, South Carolina
Lowcountry Preparatory	Pawleys Island, South Carolina
Silver Bluff High	Aiken, South Carolina

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor and HII partnership company, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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