

Mt. SAC Turf Teams Repeat in Orlando

This January, Mt. SAC horticulture students returned to the Sports Turf Managers Association's Annual Conference to defend their title in the 13th Annual Student Challenge. The Student Challenge, an exam testing knowledge of the sports turf industry, covers subjects as diverse as Turfgrass Identification, Selection and Morphology, Soil Management, Soil Fertility, Water Management, Drainage, Turfgrass Mathematics, Pest Identification and Management, and both turf and non-turf Sports Field Management.

This year's conference took place January 24–28 in Orlando, Florida. Mt. SAC entered twelve students on three teams into the competition, plus one alternate who competed in the four-year competition with a student from Maryland—our largest group yet. It was our 5th year with a co-ed group of students; we also boast greater diversity than any of the other teams.

I am proud to report that all teams had outstanding finishes. Team 207, with Ashley Simpkins, Ryan Ramirez, Gretchen Heimlich and Sean McLaughlin, finished in 1st place—bringing the sixth National Championship and a \$5,000.00 prize back to Mt. SAC. Team 201, with Jeff Truschel, Osmond Van, Trisha Moreira and Zoe Jacobson, finished in 3rd place. Team 209, with Mark Nakatsui, Tori Kramer, Ashlee Armstrong and Raymond Martinez, finished in 4th place. Blake Bernstein was our alternate. The team coaches are Horticulture Professors Brian Scott and Chaz Perea.

This year there were 35 teams from across the country, nine of which were in the two-year college category. Mt. SAC Team 207 had the third-highest score out of all 35 teams competing. Eight of our students were competing for the first time—including the entire third place team! Mt. SAC has placed amongst the top three teams more consistently than any other school. Since 2007, we have had six 1st place finishes, three 2nd place finishes, and seven 3rd place finishes. In the eleven years we have competed, the only year we did not have a team finish in the top three was 2010, when we finished 4th. I believe this consistency is a testimony to the quality of students that come through our program every year and their commitment to excellence. It is also a testimony to the commitment of Chaz Perea, who has implemented an outstanding and intense training program, dedicating countless hours to meeting with the teams, creating study materials and executing practice exams.

Due to the generosity of Hunter Industries (thanks Lynda Wightman!) and the SAFE Foundation, students competing in the Student Challenge are awarded free conference registration. The 2017 Mt. SAC Turf Team would also like to thank West Coast Turf, Mt. SAC Associated Students and the Greater L.A. Basin STMA for making it possible for them to compete. The donations of these organizations funded the team's trip this year. We truly could not have done it without their support. Thanks to you all!

Gretchen Heimlich and Victoria (Tori) Kramer Win SAFE Foundation Scholarships

Gretchen Heimlich was awarded the Dr. Fred Grau Scholarship in the amount of \$1,250. This is awarded to the top applicant from a two-year program, and is named in honor of Dr. Fred Grau, the first turfgrass extension specialist in the United States. Tori Kramer was awarded the Dr. James Watson Scholarship in the amount of \$1,200. This scholarship is presented to the top undergraduate applicant, and is named in honor of long-time green industry researcher and consultant Dr. James Watson. It is funded by the Toro

Giving Program. Gretchen and Tori were presented the scholarships at the annual award dinner on Friday night at the conference. Congratulations Gretchen and Tori!



L to R: Jeff Truschel, Ray Martinez, Gretchen Heimlich, Oscar Del Real, Blake Bernstein, Mark Nakatsui, Chaz Perea, Tori Kramer, Trisha Moreira, Ozzy Van, Zoe Jacobson, Ryan Ramirez, Ashley Simpkins, Ashlee Armstrong and Sean McLaughlin



L to R: Troy (Hunter), Chaz, Ozzy, Zoe, Trish, Jeff , Lynda Wightman (Hunter) and Brian. Hunter Industries sponsors the Student Challenge.



Chaz and Brian. Sharp Dressed Men!



L to R: Troy (Hunter), Chaz, Ryan, Ashley, Sean, Gretchen, Lynda Wightman (Hunter) and Brian.