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## Pine-Richland debate team wins top spot at international competition



TONY LARUSSA | Thursday, May 5, 2022 3:14 p.m.



COURTESY OF INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC POLICY FORUM

Pin-Richland High School debate team member Andrew Ni, right, makes an oral argument while colleagues Amish Sethi and Miles Brown look on during the finals competition of the 21st annual International Public Policy Forum in New York City on April 30.

When it comes to making a strong, fact-based and reasoned argument about a complex subject, Pine-Richland students can now claim the title of best on the planet.

A six-member team of Pine-Richland High School students emerged from a field of 120 participants from around the world to win first place in the 21st annual International Public Policy Forum sponsored by New York University and The Brewer Foundation, which awarded scholarships to the

winning teams.

Pine-Richland took home the competition's \$10,000 grand prize. The school's debate team will receive \$5,000 and the remainder will be split between the team members.

Pine-Richland's team is coached by high school teacher Jeff Byko and the team members are Miles Brown, Callie Stoltz, Andrew Ni, Amish Sethi, Tadg Manna and Matthew Farmar.

"This championship is such a tremendous accomplishment for these six students," Byko said. "From writing their cases in the beginning to the eventual oral debates, they consistently worked not only to understand their topic — U.S. dollar hegemony isn't on the top of most people's interest lists — but to master it.

"Their results showed they mastered it better than everyone else," he said. "I couldn't be happier or prouder of them."

Sethi, who is a senior, said participating in the competition was a memorable experience.

"After working nine months together in a deep dive on the world economy, we are ecstatic to see our hard work pay off on the international stage," he said. "While it certainly took a lot of work, the memories we have made along the way are unforgettable."

The runner-up team was Potomac Oak from Rockville, Md., which received a \$3,500 prize.

The only other school from Pennsylvania to make it to the Elite Eight was North Allegheny, which was eliminated during the quarterfinals competition.

The other five teams were: Amity Regional High School, Woodbridge, Conn.; the Bergen County Debate Club, Fort Lee, N.J.; The Davidson Academy of Nevada, Reno, Nev.; Extraordinary Education Centre, Toronto, Canada; and Ministry of Education, Singapore.

The 2021-22 competition began in October with 120 teams submitting essays to make it to the qualifying round.

The topic for this year's competition was titled "Resolved: On balance, the hegemony of the United States dollar is detrimental to the world economy."

Judges narrowed the field to the 64 teams that went on to participate in a single-elimination, written debate contest.

Between November and March, the field was whittled down to 32, then 16, and finally to the "Elite Eight" teams that competed in the finals on April 30 at the Harold Pratt House in New York City.

In New York, Pine-Richland advanced over the team from Singapore, in the quarterfinal round and then Amity Regional High School in the semifinal round before facing off against Potomac Oak for the finals.

"These student debaters impressed the judges with their strong advocacy skills — ultimately winning



demonstrated superior written scholarship and oral advocacy skills in a rigorous test of their academic abilities," Brewer said. "The results achieved here suggest the promise of bright futures. Congratulations to the team for excelling in a debate involving a complicated public policy issue."

The competitions were judged by a panel comprised of Brewer, NYU President Emeritus John Sexton NYU Stern School of Business Dean Raghu Sundaram, Above the Law Senior Editor Kathryn Rubino and Miha Andric, an international debate coach and communication teacher based in Slovenia.

"I have enormous confidence in these students — and the power they have to positively impact the world around them," Sexton said. "They are destined for great things."

The annual competition is open to public and private high schools around the world and is free to enter.

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