

Illinois Tech students take home top prizes in ComEd Student Innovation Contest

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Commonwealth Edison, most commonly referred to as ComEd, is the largest electric utility company in the state of Illinois. ComEd serves electricity service to the Chicago area and other parts of northern Illinois.

On May 27, 2014, ComEd officially announced the launch of its new Student Innovation Challenge, a contest that challenged students within ComEd's service area to create innovative products or services that would help low-income customers better manage their electricity consumption in order to save money. The solutions had to relate to ComEd's new smart meter technology, digital electric meters that collect energy usage information and sent it to ComEd at regular intervals, allowing customers to attempt to better understand their energy usage.

The contest received entries from over 60 students at 11 different colleges and universities; the top five finalists were selected to present their ideas at a judging and award ceremony for a share of a \$10,000 prize. These top five finalists included three proposals designed by IIT students.

On October 23, on the 57th floor

of the Chase Building downtown, the judging and awards ceremony began with a brief introduction from several ComEd representatives. ComEd's President and CEO, Anne Pramaggiore, led the evening with a few opening remarks. "We knew this competition was no small task, but we were also confident that our local talent in our local universities were a tremendous resource that we need to tap into," said Pramaggiore. "The contest submissions this evening were envisioned by the bright minds of tomorrow's innovators, and they are superb."

Each proposal then presented their ideas to a panel of four judges, including Jason Blumberg, the CEO and Managing Director of Energy Foundry, Emile Cambry, Jr., professor at North Park University's Kellogg School of Management and founder of entrepreneurship incubator BLUE1647, Karen Weigert, Chief Sustainability Officer for the City of Chicago, and Andrea Zopp, CEO and President of Chicago Urban League.

The first proposal to present was by Christina Noonan, a master's degree candidate at Illinois Institute of Technology's Institute of Design. Her idea focuses on modifying customer behavior by using networked energy monitors that allow customers to know how

they are using their energy and how they can change their habits to save money on electricity.

The next proposal was presented by Xinli Lin and Szu Ying Ching, also master's degree students at IIT's Institute of Design. Their proposal is a prepaid electricity program where customers can buy a prepaid card at local retailers, link that value with their ComEd account, then monitor the money and energy that they spend as time goes on, allowing them to keep track of their account balance in real time as well as offering energy-saving tips and rewards for low energy consumption.

Ryan Reichelt, doctoral student at Northwestern University, presented his concept next. His product is a free smartphone application that shows ComEd smart meter data to customers in a user-friendly and engaging format that is easily understood. His app also offers several features such as goal-setting and publishing achievements to social media.

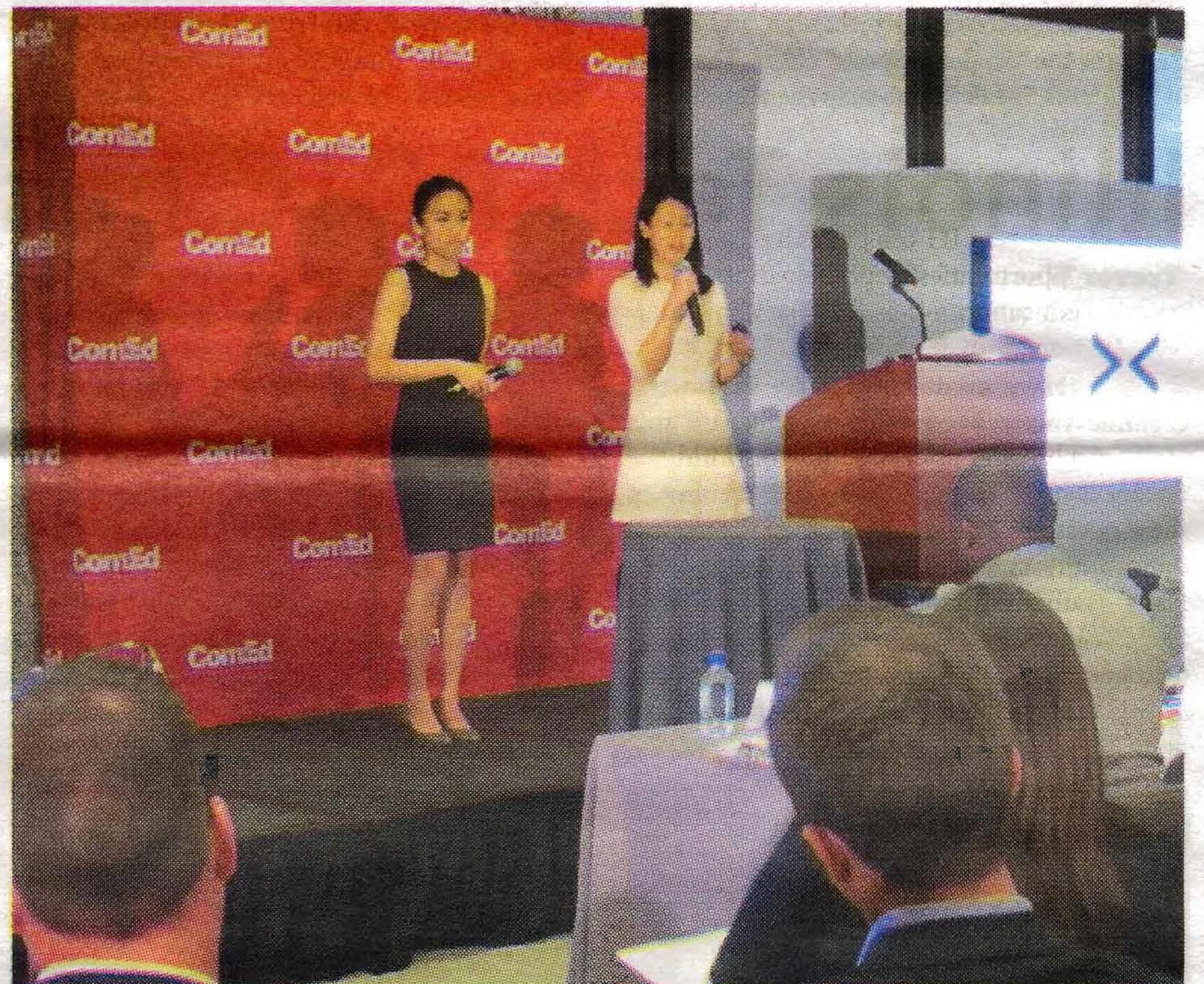
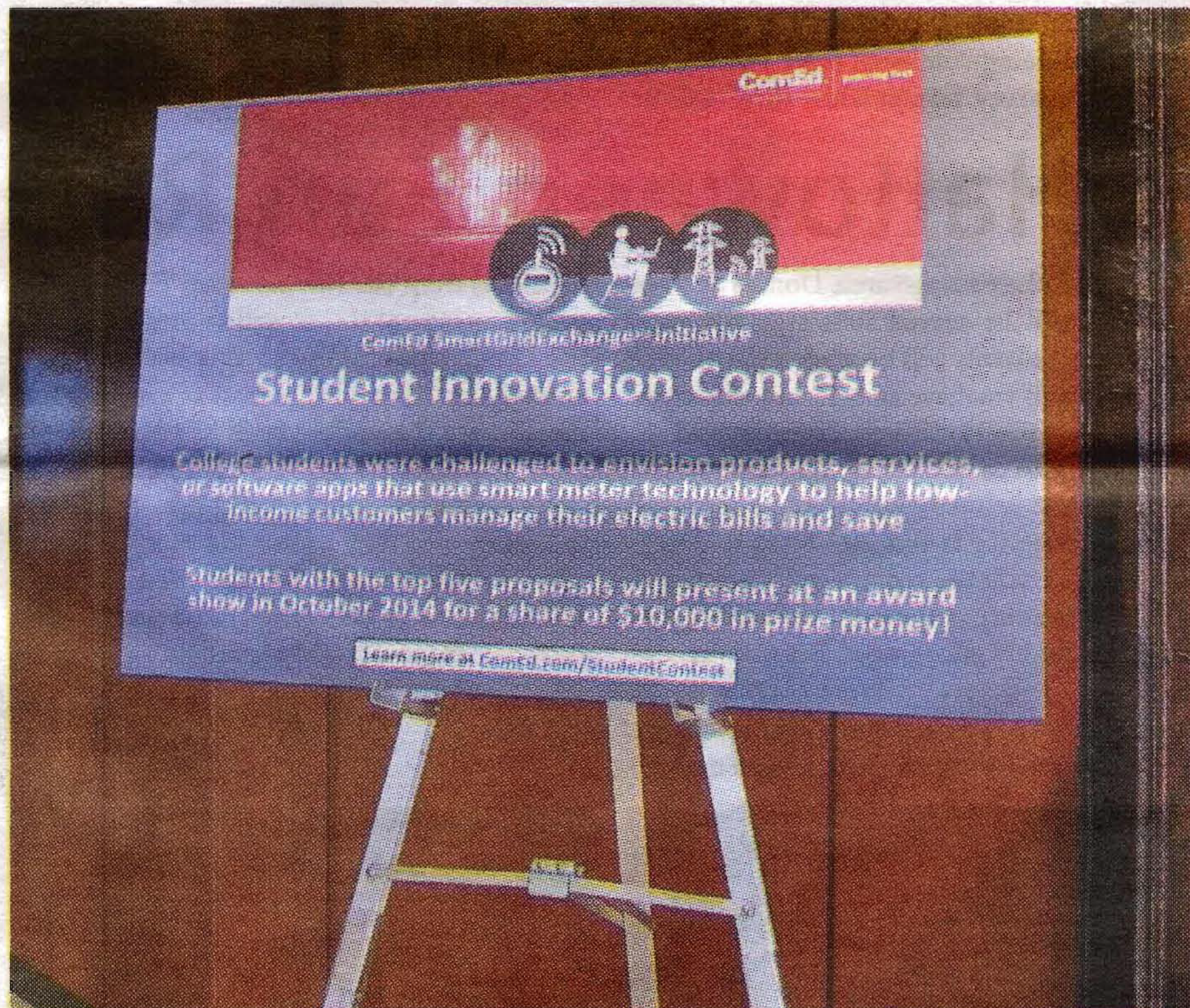
The next proposal was presented by Peter Graff, Hamsel de la Cruz, and Steve Krejcik, all students at University of Illinois - Chicago. Their team's solution is an object that looks very similar to a household light dimmer that is paired with ComEd's smart meter, allowing customers to have an easy-to-reach

visual representative of the electricity usage in their household without needing internet access.

The final proposal came from Abiodun Iwayemi, another IIT student. His idea is to use custom-manufactured electrons to help customers identify and monitor their energy consumption and present that data on smartphones and tablets.

After over an hour of presentations and time for the judges to deliberate, the final results were in. The fifth place prize went to Noonan from IIT, the fourth place prize went to Graff, de la Cruz, and Krejcik from UIC, the third place prize went to Reichelt from Northwestern University, the second place prize went to Iwayemi from IIT, and the first place prize was awarded to IIT students Lin and Ching for their proposal.

All of the student competitors presented interesting and innovative solutions that can benefit energy customers in the city, and each team shared part of the prize money awarded by ComEd. Illinois Tech is certainly home to great minds of innovation that will be shaping the lives of people in the future.



Photos by Kori Bowns

ARC Spotlight: Veronica Hannink

Khaleela Zaman
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Occasionally at the Academic Resource Center (ARC)'s MMAE table, you will find Veronica Hannink. Finishing out her last semester at IIT, she has been here for six years while pursuing a co-terminal degree (both a bachelor's and a master's) in mechanical engineering. Based on the reasons why Veronica enjoys working at the ARC, it is no surprise that she has been working there for seven semesters now. "I love to help people learn," she says. She enjoys teaching the subject and has even considered eventually teaching it as a profession. For now, though, she will be working in the industry for a while and will see what happens, knowing the plethora of possibilities available in her field. Veronica has already secured a job to follow her graduation in December working with Electro-Motive Diesel.

In order to sum up how beneficial the ARC is for students, Veronica Hannink said that the ARC is a good resource. She elaborated that the tutors can often identify with the students on a lot of things, and the tutors are usually easier to approach with a problem

than the professor. Even just hearing the material from a different perspective in a different learning environment than in class with the professor is often very helpful for students. There is also the opportunity to go to the ARC just to work with friends, utilizing the online materials or coming in for an exam review. Obviously, the ARC has a lot to offer in order to help students perform better in their classes.

Who really is MMAE tutor Veronica Hannink? She considers herself an "eclectic person," who balances extracurricular with her studies. Veronica has run track and cross country, sang in the a cappella group, and is a part of the Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. She clearly "know[s] how to have fun and pursue interests... and how to study."

Veronica's piece of advice to students is to work hard--put in the effort--while also learning to get enough sleep and eat properly. She also encourages students to live life to the fullest, not to just study. She says that college is "such a time of exploration," where it is about "learning about yourself as much as it is about learning about your field." In Hannink's words, "work hard and live well."

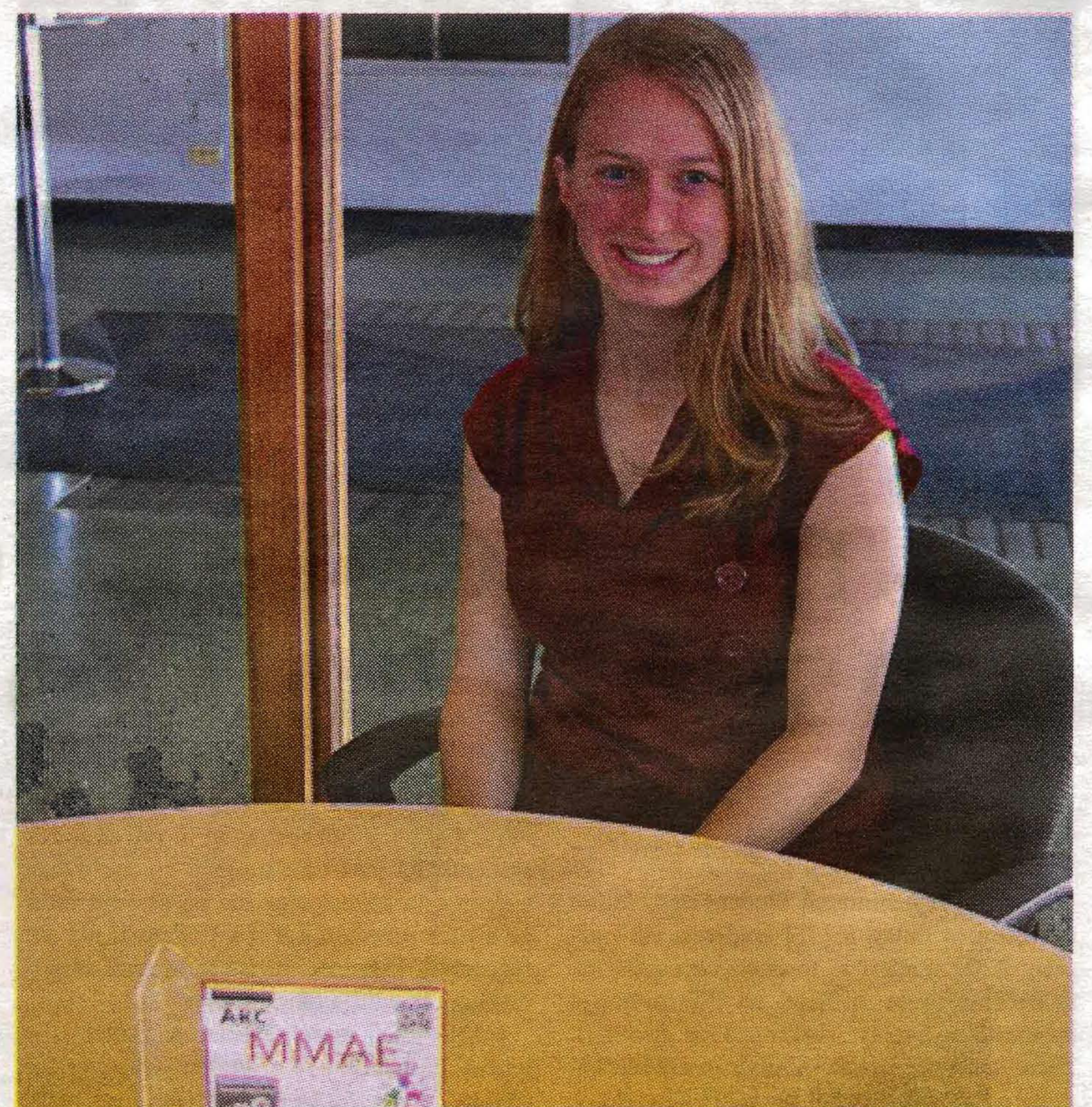


Photo by Khaleela Zaman