



Econ Challenge State Finals bring out the best and brightest

by: Andrea Gallagher

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Top economic students in Nebraska competed at the Econ Challenge State Finals.

The top economic students throughout Nebraska came out to the Kansas City Fed's Omaha Branch for the 2024 Nebraska Economics Challenge, hosted in collaboration with the Nebraska Council on Economic Education. Students qualify for the event by competing in an online challenge. Throughout the day, high schoolers show off their economics knowledge by taking an exam in addition to a critical thinking group presentation.

Waverly High School teacher Trent Goldsmith has taught economics for 28 years. He's brought teams to this competition many times and enjoys the camaraderie and friendly rivalry between schools.

"The kids like the competition, and to see how they stack up against other schools," he said. "It's kind of like econ sports, they get super excited about competing."

"I really like it because it brings together people from different schools and we can have a day of economics," said Waverly junior Marisa Gross.

"I like the real-world aspect of it," said Waverly junior Marianna Brasch. "A lot of adults don't like to talk to kids our age about it (economics), I enjoy getting to know how the world works."

Senior Vice President and Omaha Branch Executive Nate Kauffman spoke to the students about the state of the economy, interest rates, inflation and other topics. Students were able to ask questions which ranged from studying economics in college, affordable housing and more.



Omaha Branch Executive Nate Kauffman speaks to the students.

"I enjoyed it, economics is fun to learn about," said Isaac Hagen, a senior from St. Paul Public Schools. "I like the idea of how it makes you think of a majority of people other than yourself."

"I loved being tested over the information we worked hard to learn," added Mason Childers, also a senior at St. Paul Public Schools. "I like learning about the broader systems, how goods and services are distributed."

Judges rated the students' tests and presentations and the top four schools advanced to the Quiz Bowl round of competition which included two categories: AP and honors students compete in the Adam Smith division, and first-time students with one economics class compete in the David Ricardo division.



The Waverly teams compete in the quiz bowl round.

Millard North won the Adam Smith division, with Lincoln East as the runner-up, while two Waverly teams got first and second place in the David Ricardo division. Winning students receive \$250 each while runners-up take home \$100. First place winners advance to the National Econ Challenge taking place in New York in June.

“It’s a very good accomplishment, and a great way to apply the economics knowledge they’ve learned,” said Millard North teacher Jeff Gustafson.



Millard North won the Adam Smith division.

“It’s a good opportunity for kids to get out of the classroom and show their skills off and interact with other intelligent kids,” said St. Paul teacher Stephanie Holdsworth.

This is the third year the Nebraska Council on Economic Education partnered with the Federal Reserve to host the event in this format.

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Andrea Gallagher is the Senior Public Affairs Specialist at the Omaha Branch. In this role, she creates internal and external content, as well as supporting the Regional, Public and Community Affairs division. Previously, Gallagher worked as a reporter for ten years, then moved into public relations and college communications before joining the Bank. She received her B.A. in journalism from Creighton University.

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Waverly won the David Ricardo division.