High School Students in NYC and the Atlanta Area Sweep Top Awards in Council for Economic Education's 2026 National Economics Challenge

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Nearly 10,000 Kids Competed to Make it to the Two-Day Event Where 16 State Champions Faced Off for Winning Title

Teams from La Jolla, CA, McLean, VA, Farmington, CT and Sammamish, WA Placed in the Top Four

ATLANTA, June 1, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- In the age of AI, critical thinking is critically important. To that end, the **Council for Economic Education** announced winners of its 26th annual **National Economics Challenge** where high school students from state-championship teams compete over two days (May 28th and 29th) at The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

A total of 16 teams from 14 public, private and charter schools from 11 states answered questions on micro and macroeconomics and global events that would stump most adults!

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Students from Hunter College High School in NYC won first place in the Council for Economic Education's National Economics Challenge 2026 in the David Ricardo division for students who have taken no more than one economics class. This team of 9th graders competed against state championship teams (and nearly 10,000 students overall) for the winning title. (L to R): Ronav Shah, Maile Meyoung Thung, Ivy Ponda and Mihir Kumar. The event was held at the Federal Reserve Bank in Atlanta.

A team from Lambert High School from Suwanee, GA won the Council for Economic Education's National Economics Challenge 2026 in the Adam Smith division for those taking honors, AP classes or returning competitors. (L to R): Shivam Gupta, Ethan Baek, Arhan Barve and Ishaan Somaka.

There are two rounds: a critical thinking round where students are given a prompt and must solve an economic issue, present slides and defend their position in a Q+A with judges 25 minutes later. Several teams are eliminated, and others advance to a Quiz Bowl where students have 20 seconds to respond to questions.

The competition is split into two divisions: The David Ricardo Division for first-time participants who have taken no more than one economics course and The Adam Smith Division for returning and honors students.

The 2026 NEC David Ricardo Division winners are:

- First place: Hunter College High School (New York, NY)
  - Ronav Shah, Maile Meyoung Thung, Ivy Ponda, Mihir Kumar
  - Coach: Ellen Fox
- First runner-up: Lambert High School (Suwanee, GA)
  - Andrew Chang, Hyun Kim, Aidan Chan Hwang, Aayush Keskar, Antony Wang
  - Coach: Catherine Arbeiter
- Second runner-up: Langley High School (McLean, VA)
  - Jason Wu, Arav Sobhani, Tanish Reddy Gottimukkula, Arnav Khetarpal
  - Coach: Jennifer Stocks
- Third runner-up: Skyline High School (Sammamish, WA)
  - Zorawar Sing, Joaquin Calle, Aryan Sharma, Eshaan Emani
  - Coach: Jennifer Paulsen

The 2026 NEC Adam Smith Division winners are:

- First place: Lambert High School (Suwanee, GA). Winning in a nail-biter round
  - Shivam Gupta, Ethan Baek, Arhan Barve, Ishaan Somaka
  - Coach: Catherine Arbeiter
- First runner-up: Hunter College High School (New York, NY)
  - Alexei Varah, Winnie Mok, Xiayang Huang, Joseph Ponda
  - Coach: Ellen Fox
- Second runner-up: Farmington High School (Farmington, CT)
  - Vedant Kansara, Claire Yu, Kriti Jaladurgan, Felix Li
  - Coach: Joel Nick
- Third runner-up: The Bishop's School (La Jolla, CA)
  - Andrew Waang, Jack Jin, Brian Kim, Alex Yang
  - Coach: Damon Halback

"All of these young scholars have achieved greatness," said the Council for Economic Education's CEO Steve Bumbaugh. "They've devoted countless hours to the mastery of complex economic concepts, learned how to trust themselves and one another, and problem-solve in mere seconds. I'm certain that the critical thinking skills they've built by studying economics will take them far in their academic and professional lives. I'm so inspired by this next generation of leaders."

Today only 22 states mandate an economics course for high school graduation, down from 26 in 2024, according to the Council for Economic Education's bi-annual **Survey of the States**, underscoring these students' incredible commitment in learning this material.

In addition to bragging rights, trophies and medals, each finalist and team coach receive cash prizes: $1,000 each for first place, $500 each for first runner-up, $250 each for second runner-up and $200 each for third runner-up.

The U.S. winners then compete against students who flew in from China for the event. The Hunter College High School David Ricardo team beat Shenzhen Middle School. The Independent Schools Foundation Academy from China took the winning title as the Lambert High School Adam Smith team placed second.

Morgan Stanley is the national partner for the National Economics Challenge.

The students are available for interview as are images and b-roll from the event.

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