Fourteen highly qualified high school chemistry students participated in the 50th U.S. National Chemistry Olympiad on Saturday, April 14, 2018. These students are from the Maryland area and one of them from Philadelphia. The team was competing with approximately 1300 students at the national level! Students used the facilities at the Community College of Baltimore County, CCBC at Catonsville campus. Three long and challenging exams were given at the Mathematics and Science (MASH) building.
The Maryland Section of the American Chemical Society (ACS) nominated the above students after a process of registration, teacher recommendation and a preliminary qualifying local examination. We congratulate all nominees for their academic excellence and commitment to chemistry. Special thanks to parents and teachers for their continuing guidance; the success of these youngsters is a direct result of their encouragement and support.

The U.S. National Chemistry Olympiad Consist of 5-hour examination process on chemistry theory, laboratory skills and problem solving exercises. The first part of the exam evaluated student’s knowledge in inorganic and organic chemistry. This exam consisted of 60 multiple choice questions.

The second part was the laboratory practical. Students’ creativity and logical thinking process are tested in this part of the exam. Students must design and carry out their own experiments to solve two questions. The equipment for each experiment is placed on the laboratory bench prior to the exam thus giving students a guideline on procedures to use.
The third part of the exam consisted of 8 problem solving questions. These questions are to be answered in a booklet in essay form. This part of the exam can be the most challenging part of the exam in part because it requires writing ability in addition to chemistry knowledge.

Students had pizza for lunch at the chemistry conference room where they enjoyed lively conversation on their topics of interest, plans for college, chemistry jokes and gave a token of appreciation to the teachers at CCBC. This relaxing atmosphere helps students connect and relate to one another. Students received a jacket with the ACS Maryland logo; this team-souvenir will remind them of their accomplishment for quite few years. They also receive a publication from ACS. See the next picture where we capture one happy moment!

Next Steps – The results of this exam will be the basis to select 20 students from across the US to participate in the chemistry camp at the US Air Force Academy in Colorado (June 10-25). After a grueling training period the top four students will be chosen to represent the United States at the International Chemistry Olympiad in Prague, Czech Republic (July 19 - 29).

The US National Chemistry Olympiad is open to all high school students in the State of Maryland. The invitations to all schools are sent during the months of December and January. The registration and local examination occur during the months of February and March. The National Exam is in April.

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