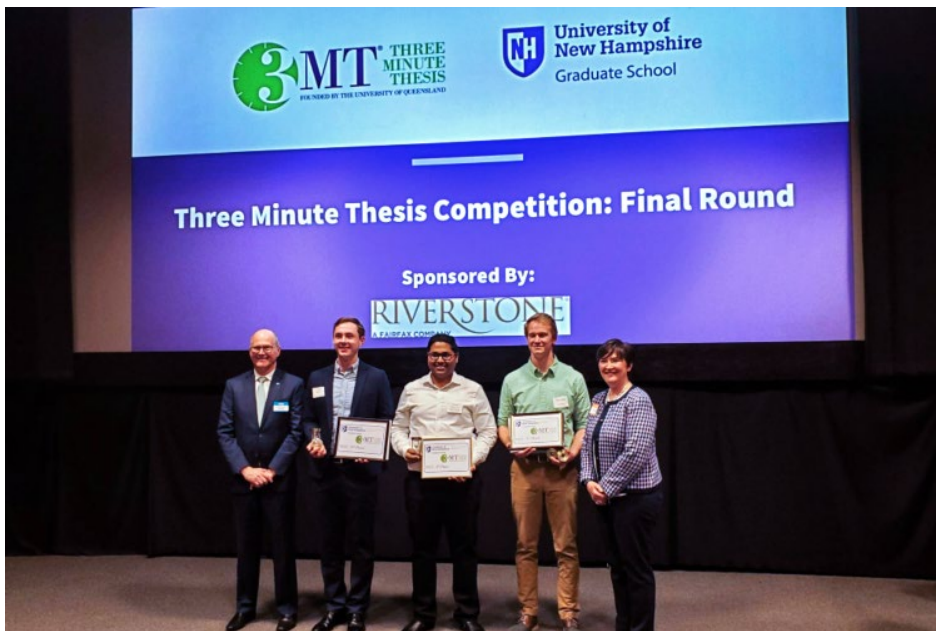


3MT Challenge Reaches New Heights

Friday, April 15, 2022



For the first time since 2019, University of New Hampshire graduate students were able to stand on stage live in front of an audience and compete in the 3 Minute Thesis Competition, which was a lively and engaging success. The 3MT is an annual competition where graduate students can hone their public speaking and self-promotional skills while spotlighting the inspiring research they do at UNH. After two years of virtual-only events, the 2022 3MT returned to the stage, but retained the best of both worlds. As the crowds once again filled the Memorial Union Building's Theater II, viewers at home were able to join in a live stream of the competition.

“How fantastic is this?” Cari Moorhead, dean of the Graduate

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3MT 2019: The Results

The finals of the fourth annual event were held April 3.

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Drummond Biles and Meagan Wengrove are not only recent PhD graduates from UNH, but they are also soon to be married.

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3MT Challenge

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are all the details.

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School, said to kick off the event. “We’re doing both at the same time ... and we’re really looking forward to an exciting afternoon!”

Audiences everywhere were indeed treated to some strong presentations. Eleven students from graduate departments ranging from chemistry to civil engineering to education condensed their scholarly work into three-minute presentations with only a single visual slide to assist them. Each student was then evaluated on their comprehension, content, engagement and communication skills by a panel of judges led by UNH President James Dean.

Chemical engineering Ph.D. student Sathya Jagadeesan took home the top prize with his presentation on how rust can be used to store green energy. His thesis work aims to address the pressing need for safer energy storage as the world switches to renewable sources of power, which can’t always be generated on demand.

“Most commercial batteries use organic solutions which are dangerous and can catch fire easily,” Jagadeesan explained from the stage. His work replaces the toxic chemicals with simple rust and water, which isn’t just safer but also “could save 70% more money than most commercial batteries.”

Jagadeesan commanded the stage during his presentation, speaking with clarity and authority on his work, which electrified the audience and earned him first place. Reflecting on the experience afterward, Jagadeesan shared further insights into what the event meant to him.

“The most rewarding part was boosting my self-confidence. As a second language speaker, I was always stepping back whenever there was some competition in English,” he says. But Jagadeesan took the plunge anyway and signed up not just for the 3MT, but also for a series of workshops to help him prepare. “I learned so

many tips from [3MT organizers] Jovana and Caroline, and my peers. They really improved my talking ... thank you so much for that!"

Rounding out the top three were Nikolai Matukhno in second place and Nick Pollak in third. Matukhno is a Master's student in mechanical engineering whose work focuses on predicting how different metal materials will react to stretching and shaping. Pollak, a chemistry Ph.D. student, gave a presentation entitled Combating Climate Change with Sandwiches, garnering curious smiles from the audience. The sandwich in question is made up of carbon nitride and black phosphorus, which can help break down the CO₂ in the atmosphere. Pollak's casual tone and impressive work earned him the People's Choice Award in addition to bronze.

"One of the most rewarding parts of the competition was being able to connect with a larger group of people as opposed to just my peers," said Pollak during a Q&A with the audience. "Being able to tell other people and people from the community and people from different walks of life what I do ... it's really nice. It adds the human aspect back into science."

This year's judging panel included three members of the UNH community - Dean, Julia Simpson from Research Integrity Services and Ivo Nedyalkov of the mechanical engineering department. Joining them were Mark Bayer, former US Senate chief of staff and nonprofit consultant; Bob Baines, director of the education reform initiative STEAM Ahead NH; Kass Arding, secretary of the USNH board of trustees & chair of the governance committee; and Karon Walker, the former deputy general counsel for Ernst & Young Global Network.

Thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Riverstone Group, each finalist took home a prize of at least \$100 for their hard work. Matt Kunish, chief business development officer for Riverstone, shared his enthusiasm for the three-year partnership with UNH's

3MT: “I was blown away by how impressive you were. I’ve said to my staff: be brief, be brilliant, be gone. And you certainly did that today.”

2021 3MT Winning Presentations

- Sathya Jagadeesan - “Storing Green Energy in Rust” (1st Place; Ph.D. in chemical engineering student)
- Nikolai Matukhno “One Grain at a Time” (2nd place; MS in mechanical engineering student)
- Nick Pollak “Combating Climate Change with Sandwiches” (3rd place & People’s Choice Winner; Ph.D. in chemistry student)

For more information on the 3MT, [please visit the Graduate School's website.](#)

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