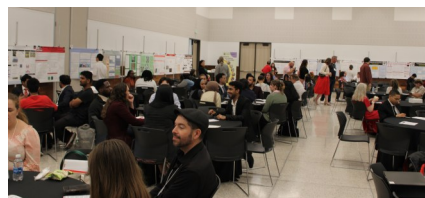


Thank you for joining us at EXPO 2026!



The Awards Ceremony of the EXPO 2026

The thirteenth edition of the EXPO conference, which is the Annual Exhibit of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities at Lamar University, was hosted in the Setzer Student Center, from April 30 — May 1, to celebrate the national week of undergraduate research. We welcomed a record number of undergraduate and graduate students participants from Lamar and five other schools in Texas: UT Austin, UT Dallas, UTMB—Galveston, University of Houston, and East Texas A&M. There were a record number of 53 posters displayed in the Live Oak Ballroom and 45 exceptional research talks on various topics of the academic areas included in our six colleges at Lamar University. Today we recognize twenty-four student participants at EXPO 2026, for their outstanding (oral or posters) presentations. The list of winners is included in this brochure.

Dr. Cristian Bahrim, Director of O.U.R.

Important Dates for Summer—Fall 2026

May 27 — S.U.R.F. Kickoff Day—A brief presentation of all summer projects.

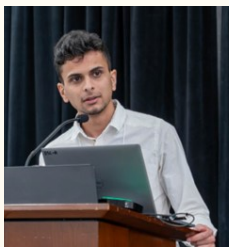
June 16—17 —Mid-term report— A casual discussion about the S.U.R.F project.

June and July — Each S.U.R.F. student will participate to one NSO session (see at <https://www.lamar.edu/admissions/orientation/index.html>) and one Lamar summer camp to talk about his/her research experience and S.U.R.F. project.

August 2 — End of the S.U.R.F. summer research phase with a research report.

September 11 — O.U.R. Orientation and the fifth Annual S.U.R.F. Symposium.

November 13 — The 13th Annual O.U.R. Fall Conference (one day event).



**First Place for Poster Presentation
Undergraduate STEM category
In-progress Research Level**

Winner: Nirbhik Neupane

Mentor: Dr. Rakibul Islam

Department of Computer Science, Lamar University
"Large Language Models for An Empirical Study of App Review Classification."



**Second Place for Poster Presentation
Undergraduate STEM category
In-progress Research Level**

Winner: Alejandra Castro-Huerta

Mentors: Dr. Sidney Lin

Dan F. Smith Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, Lamar University
"Thermal Analysis of Paraffin Based Phase Change Materials for Packaging Applications."



**Third Place for Poster Presentation
Undergraduate STEM category
In-progress Research Level**

Winner: Ailinh Tran

Mentor: Dr. Sylvestre Twagirayezu

Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, Lamar University
"Detector Response Matrices for Detector-Independent Neutrino Interaction Model Comparisons"



**Honorable Mention—Poster Presentation
Undergraduate STEM category
In-progress Research Level**

Winner: Morgan Claxton

Mentor: Dr. Iván Ojeda-Ruiz

Department of Mathematics, Lamar University
"Image Segmentation Using Spectral Clustering and Normalized Cut (NCut) Measure."



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Finale of the 1st AI & Software Pitch Competition

Held as part of the 2026 EXPO Conference, the AI and Software Pitch Competition showcased innovative AI-supported applications with potential for commercial impact, research advancement, and creative innovation. Participants from a variety of disciplines presented early-stage ideas and demonstrated how their software solutions could address real-world challenges while highlighting

First Place

Winner: Aiden Ma

Westbrook High School

Mentor: Dr. Wenhao Yang

Dr. Victor Zaloom Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, Lamar University

Topic: *"MOTION (Musculoskeletal Optimization and Treatment through Immersive Orthopedic Navigation)"*



Second Place

Winners: Vivian Latona and Aminat Ayakoya

Mentors: Dr. James Curry

Dr. Victor Zaloom Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, Lamar University

Topic: *"Adsight360"*

Third Place

Winner: Farha Kamal and Mahesh B. Polineni

Mentor: Dr. Rakibul Islam

Department of Computer Science, Lamar University

Topic: *"Intelligent Degree Direction"*





**First Place for Oral Presentation
Undergraduate HASBSEB category**

Winner: Abigayle Welch

Mentor: Dr. Binod Nainabasti

Department of Physics, Lamar University

"Exploring Physics Retention Across Multiple Intelligence Types in Preparatory Physics"



**Second Place for Oral Presentation
Undergraduate HASBSEB category**

Winner: Harvest Fairchild

Mentor: Dr. Raul Prezas

Department of Speech & Hearing, Lamar University

"Phonemic Clinical Video Assessment: Strategies in Undergraduate SLP Curriculum"



**Third Place for Oral Presentation
Undergraduate HASBSEB category**

Winner: Evan Wolford

Mentor: Mr. Andre Favors

Department of Communication & Media, Lamar University

"The Evolution of the One-Shot in Filmmaking"



**First Place for Oral Presentation
Undergraduate STEM category**

Winner: Sneha Jobby

Mentor: Dr. Ashwini Kucknoor

Department of Biology, Lamar University

"Role of lncRNAs in Modulating Leishmania Amazonensis Infectivity in Macrophages"



**Second Place for Oral Presentation
Undergraduate STEM category**

Winner: Mohamed Irhabi

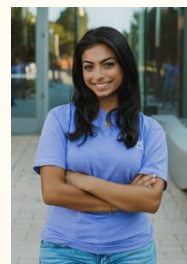
Department of Biology, Lamar University

Mentor: Dr. Ioannis Petropoulos &

Dr. Ashwini Kucknoor

Division of Research in Medicine, Weill Cornell Medicine –Qatar

"Retinal OCT Angiography as a Window to Neurovascular Small-Vessel Disease in Ischemic Stroke"



**Third Place for Oral Presentation
Undergraduate STEM category**

Winner: Layali Abusaleh

Dan F. Smith Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering,

Lamar University

Mentor: Dr. Sylvestre Twagirayezu

Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, Lamar University

"Temperature-Dependent Analysis of Petroleum Mixtures by Molecular Rotational Resonance Spectroscopy."



**First Place for Oral Presentation
Graduate STEM category**

Winner: Xin Chang

Mentor: Dr. Wennie Wang

Department of Biology, University of Texas at Austin

"Chirality induced spin selectivity (CISS) in donor-acceptor (DA) cocrystals: A spin-adapted approach"



**Second Place for Oral Presentation
Graduate STEM category**

Winner: Isha Sunil Kapte

Mentor: Dr. Jason Slinker

Department of Physics, University of Texas at Dallas

"Optimizing Blue Perovskite LEDs via Dual-Ligand Assisted Quasi-2D Layering"



**Third Place (tied) for Oral Presentation
Graduate STEM category**

Winner: Ange Benise Niyikiza

Mentor: Dr. Zhifeng Ren

Department of Physics, University of Houston

"Synthesis and Characterizations of Boron Arsenide Crystals"



**Third Place (tied) for Oral Presentation
Graduate STEM category**

Winner: Iqra Zahid

Mentor: Dr. C. W. Chu

Department of Physics,

University of Houston

"The Study of Pressure Effect on Strain-Induced Superconductivity

in RuO₂ Thin Films on TiO₂ (110) substrate"

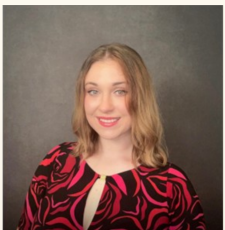


**Winner for Poster Presentation
Undergraduate HASBSEB category**

Winner: Mary Wernig

Mentor: Dr. Karen Whisenhunt-Saar
Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences,
Lamar University

"Supporting Roles: Perspectives of Neurotypical Peers' Parents in an Inclusive Theater Program."



**Runner-up for Poster Presentation
Undergraduate HASBSEB category**

Winner: Amy Schwartz

Mentor: Dr. Kirstie Boyett
Department of Criminal Justice, Lamar University
"Health vs. Criminal Framing of Substance Abuse: An Experimental Test Among College-Aged Individuals."



**Runner-up for Poster Presentation
Undergraduate HASBSEB category**

Winner: Magda Soto

Mentor: Dr. Raymond Doe
Department of Psychology, Lamar University
"Perception of Mental Health in the Latinx Community."



**Winner for Poster Presentation
Graduate HASBSEB category**

Winner: Rebecca Jones

Mentor: Dr. Priyanka Jaisinghani
Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences,
Lamar University
"The Role of Cochlear Implant-Hearing Aid Performance Disparity in Bimodal Benefit."



**Winner for Poster Presentation
Graduate STEM category—Advanced Research Level**

Winner: Mahesh Babu Polineni

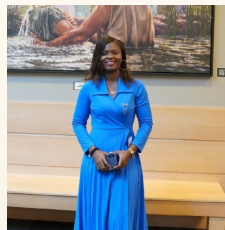
Mentor: Dr. Rakibul Islam
Department of Computer Science, Lamar University
"Intelligent Degree Direction: Empowering Academic Advising for Student Success at Lamar University."



**First Place for Poster Presentation
Graduate STEM category—In-progress Research Level**

Winner: Sima Besharat Ferdosi

Mentor: Dr. Sushil Doranga
Department of Mechanical Engineering,
Lamar University
"Nonlinear System Identification of Electronic Assemblies under the Motion Excitation."



**Second Place for Poster Presentation
Graduate STEM category—In-progress Research Level**

Winner: Alice Asamoah

Mentors: Dr. Thuy Minh Nguyen
Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry,
Lamar University
"Does Farnesol Inhibit the Formation of Ergosterol in Candida tropicalis?"



**Third Place for Poster Presentation
Graduate STEM category—In-progress Research Level**

Winner: Nathan Hughes

Mentor: Dr. Daniel Cherdack
Department of Physics, University of Houston
"Detector Response Matrices for Detector-Independent Neutrino Interaction Model Comparisons"



**Winner for Poster Presentation
Undergraduate STEM category
Early phase Research Level**

Winner: Lorena Jaquis

Mentor: Dr. Minkyum Kim
Reese Department of Construction Management,
Lamar University
"The Silent Risk in Construction: Mental Health in the Construction Industry"



**Runner-up for Poster Presentation
Undergraduate STEM category
Early phase Research Level**

Winner: Mary O'Malley

Mentor: Dr. Sylvestre Twagirayezu
Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry,
Lamar University
"Screening of Residual Solvents in Over-the-Counter (OTC) Analgesics by Molecular Rotational Resonance Spectroscopy."