



What a Rush: STS Memories

What a rush. Those are the best words to describe how it felt to be an Intel Science Talent Search finalist. Just two months ago, I spent a week in Washington D.C. as one of 40 finalists in the 2009 Intel Science Talent Search, an experience which I do not hesitate to say will be the capstone of my entire high school career.

The Intel Science Talent Search competition in and of itself was a formidable experience. The judging was the most comprehensive, the most difficult, and the most rewarding that I have experienced, and I have competed in a number of science fairs and related competitions. It was a daunting task to answer questions in front of panels of expert judges who asked me about a number of scientific fields — not just about my project on infectious disease. I was amazed how their questions made me think about science in new and different ways and stretched me to consider broader implications and limitations of my own study. When I later met with my judges, I learned much about their work and heard their advice both on science careers and broader topics, such as United States policy, colleges, and helping others in science — all of which added up to a tremendously inspiring week.

While the judging was amazing, it was the events we finalists attended that made the week unforgettable. I was interviewed by two radio stations and the *Star Tribune* — the article now hangs on the trophy wall at my school. I heard speeches by Colin Powell and Steven Chu. I presented my project to interested media stations and members of the public, had a minor planet named after me, was honored at a black-tie gala in front of 600 prestigious scientists; and, my personal highlight, I met and shook the hand of the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama. On top of that, I spoke with CEOs, vice presidents, Nobel Laureates, and researchers from Intel and other major technology companies. But, even better, I met 39 amazing science students from across the nation — and somewhere between our visits to the Capitol, our presentations at the National Academy of Sciences, our nightly formal dinners, our meeting with President Obama at the White House, and our long nights at the historic St. Regis Hotel, I gained 39 friends who will stay with me throughout my life.

While I didn't win the grand prize \$100,000 scholarship, I came out on top at STS, winning thirty-nine new wonderful friends. I truly hope that other Minnesota science students, like me and like my friend and fellow 2009 STS Finalist Michael Cherkassky, have the same opportunities that I enjoyed through the Science Talent Search.



By Stephen Trusheim