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Hillsdale College Student Wins First-Place Award From Beta Beta Beta Biological Honor Society

Hillsdale students took home five of the 12 prizes awarded at the district convention, and Connor Pratt '26 won first place at the national convention.

HILLSDALE, Mich. — Hillsdale College student Connor Pratt '26 won a national award for his biology research from the Beta Beta Beta Biological Honor Society at its biennial national convention in May. Five Hillsdale students also took home prizes at the district convention in April.

“Hillsdale College trains students to think clearly, research carefully, and communicate well, which are essential skills in any scientific endeavor,” said Andrew Russell, associate professor of biology and faculty adviser to Hillsdale’s TriBeta chapter. “Hillsdale students do high-level original research even as undergraduates, and it is exciting to see their work recognized.”

Hillsdale sent 11 students to the district convention at Wittenburg University on April 18, where they presented their research from the past year. Of the 12 prizes awarded, Hillsdale students took home five.

In the organismal, ecology, and environmental biology category, Ellie Payne '26 won first place for her oral presentation, and Emory Braswell '26 won second.

In the molecular, cellular, microbiology category, Connor Pratt '26 and Lydia Colby '26 won first and second place respectively for their oral presentations, and Erika Mogelvang '26 won third place for her poster presentation.

Hillsdale's chapter, Iota Psi, also took home awards for most participants from a member school and farthest distance traveled to attend.

Pratt and Payne took their first-place presentations to the national convention at Florida State University May 27-31, where Pratt won the Frank G. Brooks Award for Excellence in Student Research, which is given for the best oral presentations at the convention.

“My research examined how surface roughness influences bacterial biofilm formation on different implant materials, with potential implications for improving long-term patient outcomes,” Pratt said. “Being awarded first place at both the district and national levels was a humbling experience and a rewarding recognition of the effort behind this project.”

Pratt also wrote a thesis on his research, which fulfilled the requirement for a biology major at Hillsdale.

“I have an increased appreciation for the process of scientific discovery, and I am grateful for the mentorship and support I received at Hillsdale College, especially from my research advisor, Dr. Andrew Russell,” Pratt said. “Hillsdale has provided me with the foundation to continue growing as a scientist and future physician.”

Hillsdale College offers biology as both a major and a minor. All students majoring in biology conduct independent research projects, with access to equipment often only available in graduate programs. Biology labs are taught by professors, not teaching assistants, and many students have the opportunity to work with faculty members on research. The College's biology facilities include an arboretum, a greenhouse, a natural history museum, multiple on-campus laboratories, and a field research laboratory in northern Michigan.

For photos from the district convention, click [here](#). For photos from the national convention, click [here](#). For headshots of the students, click [here](#). For photos from science courses at Hillsdale College, click [here](#). For photos of Hillsdale College, click [here](#). For a high-resolution copy of the Hillsdale College clocktower logo, click [here](#).

About Hillsdale College

Hillsdale College is an independent, nonsectarian, Christian liberal arts college located in southern Michigan. Founded in 1844, the College has built a national reputation through its classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free monthly speech digest, *Imprimis*, with a circulation of more than 7.5 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

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