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SOUTHERN STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

PRESS RELEASE



Photo caption: Winners of Southern State Community College's first High School Chemistry Challenge, held October 23, 2026, at the Brown Campus. From left to right: Tavian Huguely of Lynchburg-Clay High School (first place), Jada McKinzie of Georgetown Jr./Sr. High School (second place), and Faith Wright of Georgetown Jr./Sr. High School (third place).

Southern State Hosts First Chemistry Challenge for Mole Day

Southern State Community College celebrated Mole Day on October 23, 2026, by hosting its first annual High School Chemistry Challenge at the Brown Campus. The event welcomed 20 students for a morning of academic competition, scientific learning, and community engagement.

Mole Day, celebrated each year on October 23 (10/23), recognizes Avogadro's number (6.02×10^{23}), a fundamental concept in chemistry. The annual celebration provides an opportunity to make chemistry engaging and accessible while encouraging students to explore science beyond the traditional classroom.

A total of 20 high school students participated in the chemistry challenge, including seven students from Georgetown Jr./Sr. High School and 13 from Lynchburg-Clay High School. The competition challenged students to demonstrate their chemistry knowledge, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Participants competed for awards and recognition while putting their classroom learning into practice.

The participating students were supported by their chemistry teachers, Lara Hamilton of Lynchburg-Clay High School and Madison Davis of Georgetown Jr./Sr. High School, who teach chemistry through Southern State Community College's College Credit Plus (CCP) program. Their dedication and involvement reflect the strong partnership between Southern State and local high schools in providing students with opportunities to experience college-level science education.

The event offered students an opportunity to connect with the college, interact with others who share an interest in science, and experience the excitement of chemistry in a fun and welcoming environment.

"Chemistry is all around us, but sometimes students do not get the opportunity to see how exciting and relevant it can be. Events like this allow students to challenge themselves, apply what they have learned, and discover that science is something they can actively participate in. We want them to leave with greater confidence, curiosity, and an interest in continuing their education in STEM fields," said Dr. Tatiana Luna-Pineda, Assistant Professor of Chemistry at Southern State Community College and event organizer.

The closing program featured remarks from Southern State leadership and faculty, including an overview of the College's academic programs by Brown Campus Director Dr. Peggy Chalker, a STEAM presentation by Physics faculty member Russ Clark, and a featured talk by Dr. Rain Nielsen on "Chemistry's Role in the Modern World." Students were also recognized for their achievements during the awards ceremony.

"Chemistry plays an important part in our world and is critical to fields like medicine and engineering. Learning chemistry gives our students the fundamentals they need to be successful in their future careers. A central part of chemistry education is also teaching students how to think critically, and evaluate arguments they are presented with. My goal as a chemistry educator is to show students that they are capable of being successful in science, and to introduce them to the opportunities that are available," said Dr. Rain Nielsen, Assistant Professor of Chemistry at Southern State Community College.

Southern State extends its sincere appreciation to the participating high schools, students, teachers, and everyone who contributed to making the inaugural Chemistry Challenge a success.

Events like Mole Day support the college’s ongoing commitment to community partnerships, STEM education, and creating opportunities for students to discover their interests and explore future career pathways.

For more information about science programs, community events, and educational opportunities at Southern State, visit www.sscc.edu.

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