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## Georgia, NC Students Win SE BioGENEius Regional Finals

**ATLANTA, GA (April 22, 2009)** – Georgia Bio (GaBio) congratulates **Johnny Fells III** of Northside High School, Warner Robins, GA, and **Sajith Wickramasekara** of North Carolina School of Science & Mathematics, Raleigh, N.C., for winning the Southeast regional competition of the sanofi-aventis International BioGENEius Challenge, conducted by the Arlington, Va.-based Biotechnology Institute.

Mr. Fells and Mr. Wickramasekara will represent the Southeast in the finals of the BioGENEius Challenge, held in Atlanta in conjunction with the 2009 Biotechnology Industry Organization's (BIO) International Convention, May 18-21. They will be competing against 13 other regional finalists from the United States, Canada, and Western Australia. The first place winner receives a \$7,500 cash award. Other awards are \$5,000 for second place, \$2,500 for third place, and \$1,000 for fourth place. Each remaining finalist will receive a \$500 Honorable Mention Award.

Mr. Fells' biotechnology research project is titled "*Anti-Cancer Activity of Scutellaria on Akt/PKB Signaling.*" Mr. Wickramasekara's project is "*A functional genomic framework for chemotherapeutic drug improvement and identification.*"

The two were among seven high school students from Georgia, Tennessee, Louisiana, Florida and North Carolina who competed for two Southeast regional finalist titles Monday in Atlanta. The BioGENEius competition recognizes high school students who demonstrate an exemplary understanding of biotechnology through research projects. GaBio, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Sciele Pharma, Inc. hosted the Southeast regional event at the CDC's Tom Harkin Global Communications Center. **Lynderia "Lyn" S. Cheevers**, EdD, an Instructional Systems Specialist in the CDC's Office of Workforce and Career Development, welcomed the students.

**Stuart Zola, PhD**, Director of Yerkes National Primate Research Center, presented the awards. The CDC and Sciele Pharma provided the judges. Judging from the CDC were **Erin E. Bliven**, MPH; **Mary Reichler**, M.D., and **David M. White**, D.V.M., Ph.D. From Sciele, the judges were **James M. Corbitt**, Ph.D.; **Rania Jalal**, Ph.D.; and **Caryn Lobel**, M.D.

Georgia Bio also congratulates all the state finalists who competed in the Southeast regionals:

- Florida -- **Uday Ayyagari**, Suncoast Community High School, Palm Beach Gardens, *Genetic Regulation in the NF-kB Cancer Pathway*
- Georgia -- **Kenneth Hoehn**, Creekview High School, Canton, *Phylogenetic Explorations and Analysis of the Herpesvirus Family Reveals a Surprising Evolutionary Past and Possibly Disturbing Future*
- Louisiana -- **Allison Wang**, Caddo Parish Magnet High School, Shreveport, *Investigation of the p53 Tumor Suppressor Protein in a Model Organism, the Yeast *Saccharomyces cerevisiae**
- North Carolina -- **Giovanni Leon**, East Wake School of Health Science, Raleigh, *Differential Incorporation of Cholesterol by Sindbis Virus Grown Delipidated Insect Cells*
- Tennessee - **Tianyu Xu**, Brentwood High School, Brentwood, *Characterization of isoketal scavenger by endogenous polyamines*

**The sanofi-aventis International BioGENEius Challenge** is an annual competition for high school students that recognizes outstanding biotechnology research in healthcare, agriculture and forestry, food processing, mining and the environment, and forensics.

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**The Biotechnology Institute**, which conducts the BioGENEius Challenge, is dedicated to educating teachers, students and the public about the promise and challenges of biotechnology. Through year-round programs, the Institute is creating a base of understanding and awareness about biotechnology among teachers and students –and building the next generation of leaders in the industry. Founded by the biotechnology community in 1998, the Biotechnology Institute is an independent, national nonprofit organization based in Arlington, VA.

**Georgia Bio** ([www.gabio.org](http://www.gabio.org)) is the private, non-profit association representing more than 300 pharmaceutical, biotechnology, medical device and diagnostic companies, healthcare systems, universities, research institutes and other organizations involved in the research and development of life sciences products that improve the health and well-being of people, animals and the environment worldwide.

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