



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oak Grove and Madison Central High Schools Win Economics Challenge *Twenty teams competed for state championship, scholarships*

JACKSON, Miss., March 26, 2009 – Oak Grove High School and Madison Central High School captured top honors in the Mississippi Economics and Financial Literacy Challenge March 25 at Millsaps College in Jackson. They emerged from a field of 20 high school teams to claim the state championship in their respective divisions and will advance to regional competition in Atlanta in April.

Madison Central won the competition for single semester economics students while Oak Grove took top honors in the competition for advanced placement, international baccalaureate and honors students. Zachary Yoder from Murrah High School in Jackson was named the 2009 Economics Student of the Year, an honor given to the student with the highest individual scores. Students compete on the topics of microeconomics, macroeconomics, international economics and current events.

“In this room today were some of the sharpest kids in the state, and I think we could take a group of them to Washington and solve some of our problems,” said Terry Smith, Mississippi’s economics teacher of the year in 2008 and coach of the Oak Grove team. “It’s nice to win, but the real benefit is the economic and financial education they have received. I think if this type of competition and economic teaching programs had been around earlier, our society would be much better off today.”

Oak Grove High School is part of Lamar County Schools, which is the first school district in the state to train K-12 teachers across all grade levels and disciplines to integrate economics education into the curriculum.

Each member of the winning teams receives a \$1,000 scholarship and an all-expenses paid trip to the regional competition, with an additional \$500 going to the 2009 Economics Student of the Year. Scholarships are provided by BankPlus, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi and State Farm Insurance Companies.

Sponsored by the Mississippi Council on Economic Education and now in its sixth year of competition, this year’s Challenge, for the first time, included an online first round. Competing in the first round were 101 teams, a total of 374 students, from high schools across Mississippi.

“Early results from the online first round showed that Mississippi students scored five and a half times higher than the national average of students taking the test in other states,” said Dr. Pamela Smith, president of the Mississippi Council on Economic Education. “This year’s high participation rate and impressive student scores are a direct result of the economics and financial

literacy training that more than 4,000 of our Mississippi K-12 teachers have received over the last three years.

“The students are able to succeed at this level because of the value their teachers and schools have placed on mastery of high level economics and financial literacy skills,” Smith added.

The Mississippi Council on Economic Education provides teacher training and the Virtual Economics® CD-ROM curriculum at no charge to teachers, through funding from State Farm® Insurance Companies and the Council for Economic Education. More than 200 Mississippi teachers have committed to additional professional development and earned the Master Teacher of Economics endorsement established by the Mississippi Department of Education.

Teams participating in today’s Challenge were:

David Ricardo Division (single semester economics students)

| <u>School</u> | <u>City</u> | <u>Teacher</u> |
|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| Amanda Elzy High School | Greenwood | Deborah Phillips |
| Tupelo High School | Tupelo | Angie Davis |
| Madison Central High School | Madison | Susan Shivers (2 teams) |
| Madison Central High School | Madison | Christy Walker (2 teams) |
| Kosciusko High School | Kosciusko | Suzanne Bowie |
| Picayune Memorial High School | Picayune | Lucian Roberson |
| Northwest Rankin High School | Brandon | Charles Rush Sweeney (2 teams) |

Adam Smith Division (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and honors students)

| <u>School</u> | <u>City</u> | <u>Teacher</u> |
|------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| Desoto Central High School | Southaven | Sara Jane Russell |
| Madison Central High School | Madison | Susan Shivers |
| Neshoba Central High School | Philadelphia | Sheila Watson |
| Lawrence County High School | Monticello | Eddie Rials |
| Oak Grove High School | Hattiesburg | Terry Smith |
| Northwest Rankin High School | Brandon | Charles Rush Sweeney (2 teams) |
| Clinton High School | Clinton | Charlotte Walker |
| Murrah High School | Jackson | Edward Schneider |
| Bay High School | Bay St. Louis | Stacey Pate |

The Mississippi Economics and Financial Literacy Challenge is sponsored by Goldman Sachs Foundation, the Council for Economic Education, BankPlus, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi, State Farm Insurance Companies, the Mississippi Department of Education, Millsaps College, and the Mississippi Council on Economic Education.

For more information, contact Dr. Pamela Smith at 601-974-1325.