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100 N.J. students graduate from governor's STEM Scholars program

By **ROI-NJ Staff** (Union) - May 11, 2026



The 2026 graduating class of the Governor's STEM Scholars at their Commencement Conference on May 9, 2026, at Kean University. - courtesy Governor's STEM Scholars

Lt. Gov. Dr. Dale Caldwell delivered the keynote address May 9 to 100 graduating students of the Governor's STEM Scholars, a year-long initiative of the Research & Development Council of New Jersey, at a commencement ceremony held at Kean University.

The event marked the 12th graduating class of Governor's STEM Scholars. Since its founding, more than 1,000 alumni have gone on to work in New Jersey's innovation economy, working at New Jersey-based organizations including Johnson & Johnson, AECOM, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, Novartis and PSEG.

Governor's STEM Scholars is a public-private partnership between the Research & Development Council of New Jersey, the Office of the Governor, the New Jersey Department of Education, the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, and New Jersey's public and private research organizations.

“In New Jersey, we know that investing in STEM education is investing in our future,” said Caldwell. “These scholars represent the talent, curiosity, and drive that will power our state’s innovation economy for years to come.”

Friends, family, and guardians gathered as this year’s class was recognized for completing a year-long curriculum, giving them a firsthand look at New Jersey’s STEM economy. Through conferences, site visits, and team-based research projects, Scholars worked directly with leaders across industry, academia, and government.

Scholars presented research projects led by undergraduate and graduate team leaders, each addressing a real-world challenge tied to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and focused on issues affecting New Jersey communities.

“The Governor’s STEM Scholars reflects what is possible when industry, academia, and government work together to invest in the next generation of talent,” said Jeffrey Stokes, treasurer of the Research & Development Council of New Jersey and Senior Director – Development at PSEG. “These students are not only developing critical STEM skills, they are building the connections and experiences that will keep New Jersey competitive in a rapidly evolving global economy.”

An Excellence in Research Award was presented to research lead Tze Chang (Justin) Ng, a student at Rutgers University, and team members Kaylee Carranza, Nathaly Guillen, Iona Nandy, Siddhi Omesh, Manya Rana, Reindy F. Sanon and Joshitha Sripada, for their project, “Wash! Track! Won! An Automated, Gamified Hand Hygiene Monitor for Adolescents.” The winning team will be honored at the Research & Development Council of New Jersey’s Edison Patent Awards on Nov. 19, at Bell Works in Holmdel.

During the academic year, scholars attended four conferences on STEM in government, academia, and industry, hosted by Rutgers University, Princeton University, New Jersey Institute of Technology and Kean University. They also connected with professionals through site visits at locations such as Panasonic USA and Bristol Myers Squibb and mentorship, gaining direct exposure to the careers and innovations shaping the state.

Governor’s STEM Scholars is free for all participants through the support of sponsors including Bristol Myers Squibb, Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine, Merck & Co., Novartis, Panasonic Foundation, PSEG Foundation, Spencer Savings Bank and Stryker.