Highlights of Last Year's 2020 MLTI Virtual Student Conference

The 2020 MLTI Student Conference was held in May 2020 and went virtual for the first time in its 20-year history. Despite the Department's concerns for safety and initial cancelling of the conference amid a global pandemic, MLTI staff and a team of consultants worked to quickly pivot the in-person planning to a virtual platform and the conference continued to enjoy its uninterrupted annual presence.

The first ever MLTI Virtual Student Conference was held in the middle of a global pandemic in May 2020 was a huge success with over 250, grade 3-12 students and 55 educators participating from 31 different school administrative units.

THE UBER Session:

The 2020 conference honored Maine's Bicentennial with the theme "*Looking Backward, Looking Forward."* The theme was incorporated into conference activities, contests and nearly 30 hands-on make and do sessions.

The conference culminated with the MLTI UBER session which was developed around *Maine Economic Development Strategy Report 2020-2029, A Focus on Talent and Innovation*. Eight student teams competed for the $10,000 prototype challenge sponsored by the University of Maine. Specifically, The prototype challenge offered students the opportunity to work in teams to develop an innovative product that solves a real-world problem defined in Maine DECDs 2030 report. A total of 10 students representing 6 teams received $1,000 scholarships toward tuition at the University of Maine-Orono for their submissions. The University of Maine scholarships were presented to students by Don Hummels, Professor and Chair of the Electrical & Computer Engineering Department at the University of Maine during an award ceremony via Zoom on June 4, 2020.

Building off of their experience and make and do sessions from the virtual conference, students developed an innovation in one of the five challenge categories defined in the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development's 2030 report. As part of the challenge, student teams researched, explored, and applied their conference skills to create a prototype of a product that solves a real-world problem defined in the DECD Report. Using "Design Thinking" framework, student teams created a prototype in the form of an executive summary, slide deck, demo of the product, all three forms, or some other representation of the innovative solution to the real-world problem.