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IMII Announces AI4SafeMines Finalists ***Student innovators leverage AI to take on mine safety***

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SASKATOON, SK – The International Minerals Innovation Institute (IMII) is proud to announce on behalf of its members, the results of the preliminary pitch phase of the AI4SafeMines student competition. Launched in January 2026, the AI4SafeMines student competition challenges students to compete to develop an application layer tool using AI that can make an impact on mine health and safety, focusing on in-field hazard identification and interventions.

The competition is hosted by IMII in collaboration with the ISSA Mine Safety Conference, which will host the AI4SafeMines student competition finals on September 24, 2026 in Saskatoon. ISSA Mining is the International Section on Prevention in the Mining Industry operating under the larger umbrella of the International Social Security Association (ISSA).

The contest began with students submitting expressions of interest that outlined their AI innovation concepts which were reviewed by a panel of representatives including IMII members as well as other members of the AI and Mine Safety innovation ecosystem. Student teams then advanced to a hybrid format preliminary pitch competition held on March 31, 2026.

After some challenging deliberations, the finalists selected to advance to the next phase of the AI4SafeMines Student Competition are:

- Team Turtlesell, from Saskatchewan Polytechnic and the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT)
- Team Statera, from Holy Cross High School in Saskatoon & the University of Saskatchewan
- Team TS², from the University of Saskatchewan

A fourth team was recognized by judges with an honourable mention:

- Team DL – from Reading School, Leeds, UK

Each finalist team will be provided with up to \$4,000 to develop their artificial intelligence-focused solutions to mine safety challenges from May to September and perfect their pitch. Finalists will deliver their polished pitch to a live audience at the ISSA Mine Safety Conference on September 24, 2026 in Saskatoon, with the winning team receiving a scholarship prize of \$6,000.

The March event included pitches from 10 student teams, affiliated with the following schools: University of Regina, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, the Reading School in Leeds, UK and Holy Cross High School in Saskatoon. The competition's student participants were 38% women and represented a broad range of nationalities and disciplines of study including high school, computer science, data science and several engineering disciplines. The nature



of the challenge benefited from a range of perspectives, with multi-disciplinary teams providing a competitive edge.

“AI is an emerging technology and innovation and it’s so great having these young students here to share their ideas and thoughts on how we can mitigate hazards in the workplace by using AI” said event judge Kevin Mooney, Vice-President of the Saskatchewan Workers Compensation Board and President of ISSA Mining. “We’re seeing some really good discussions and really good ideas coming out of this competition. And we so look forward to seeing what the finalists come up with to present at the ISSA conference in September.”

Students were provided with four mine safety themes as guidance on where AI might be best applied to mine safety challenges: environmental hazard awareness, human health and well-being, equipment and safety and training and performance. All four themes were represented in the innovations presented. The preliminary pitch event’s judges were impressed with the depth of understanding of mine safety challenges that students displayed in their pitches. The innovation concepts were exciting and showed promising potential for AI applications.

“AI4SafeMines brings together the emerging talent and AI technology with real-world industrial mine safe challenges. It is an opportunity for students to learn about the mining sector, safety culture and build capabilities with artificial intelligence tools, while benefitting industry with fresh perspectives and new energy the students bring to these challenges,” said Lesley McGilp, Executive Director. “AI4SafeMines is also about multi-disciplinary approaches and partnerships, and IMII is grateful for the partners that have come together to make the competition possible.”

Organizers and finalists are looking forward to the final leg of the competition and seeing the final pitches at the ISSA Mine Safety Conference in September in Saskatoon. For more info: [ISSA Mining Safety Conference - Saskatoon, Sept. 22–24, 2026 - ISSA Mining Safety Conference](#)

For the latest on the AI4SafeMines Student Competition, visit: [AI4SafeMines Student Competition | IMII](#)

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About IMII:

The International Minerals Innovation Institute (IMII) is the trusted hub for expertise and innovation in Saskatchewan’s minerals industry, driving transformative change, inspiring actionable solutions, and building a sustainable and globally respected minerals sector in the province. As a member-based organization governed by industry, post-secondary education, and government, we unite to accelerate technological innovation, develop a representative workforce, and promote thought leadership. Together, we drive progress and shape the future of the minerals sector.