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AI4SafeMines Student Competition: Five Teams, One Goal—Safer Mines *International student innovators bring AI-powered mine safety solutions to Saskatoon*

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SASKATOON, SK – The AI4SafeMines Student Competition led by International Minerals Innovation Institute (IMII) has challenged the next generation of innovators across the globe to develop AI-powered mine safety solutions. Teams from Canada, Chile and Colombia are coming together for the global finals of the AI4SafeMines Student Competition, taking place September 24, 2026, during the ISSA Mining Safety Conference in Saskatoon.

Launched earlier this year, AI4SafeMines challenged students to explore how artificial intelligence can be applied to real-world health and safety challenges in mining. Following preliminary pitches and several months of development, mentorship and coaching, five finalist teams are now preparing to take the stage to present their solutions.

The competition began with a pre-pitch event for an IMII-led cohort in Q1 of 2026 where 10 teams comprised of 27 student participants. From this event 3 finalist teams were selected to advance to the finals - Team Turtlesell, Team Statera, and Team TS². These teams include students from the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Holy Cross High School and the University of Saskatchewan.

Two follow-up Southern Hemisphere cohort pre-pitch competitions were held later in the year to allow students from those regions an opportunity to participate. These competitions drew students from the majority of the South America and Central America's mining jurisdiction countries, as well as Germany. The Chilean-led pre-pitch event was organized by the National Safety Council of Chile and involved 48 students organized into 16 teams, while the Columbian-led event was organized by the Consejo Colombiano de Seguidad (CCS) and included 30 students across 10 teams.

IMII is pleased to welcome the winning team from each of the two Southern Cohort pre-pitch events to join the global finals:

- Team IMSA, from the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile
- Team MineAir, from the Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander in Columbia

Together the five finalist teams will share their innovations and bring new perspectives, experiences and approaches to the challenge of improving mine safety through technology to an international audience at the ISSA conference.

"AI4SafeMines has been an exciting opportunity to see what is possible when we bring emerging talent, AI and real-world mining challenges together," said Lesley McGilp, Executive Director of IMII. "We're excited to welcome the teams from Chile and Colombia alongside the three Canadian finalists to the global finals in Saskatoon. Their participation brings an international perspective to the competition and

demonstrates that the challenges around mine safety—and the opportunity to innovate—extend well beyond our borders. We’re looking forward to seeing all five teams share their ideas and perspectives on leveraging AI to improve mine safety.”

The finalists have spent the past months developing their ideas with seed funding, support from industry mentors and pitch coaching, preparing their solutions and presentations for the final competition.

The winning team will receive a \$6,000 scholarship prize.

Supporting the next generation of innovation

IMII gratefully acknowledges the Canadian Chiropractic Research Foundation, whose sponsorship has helped make the AI4SafeMines Student Competition possible and the support of KPMG, who facilitated the involvement of Sean Wise as a pitch coach for the competition. Their support, along with industry volunteers, has provided students with opportunities to develop their ideas, access mentorship and coaching, and bring their innovations with conference attendees from across Canada and around the world.

The AI4SafeMines finals will take place September 24, 2026, in Saskatoon as part of the ISSA Mining Safety Conference, running September 22–24. AI4SafeMines is hosted by IMII in collaboration with the ISSA Mine Safety Conference Organizing Committee.

For more information: [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.