More than 100 students representing 19 universities descended to southeastern Pennsylvania for the 2014 National Collegiate Soil Judging Contest. The contest, which was held 3–4 Apr. 2014, was hosted by Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, PA. The students braved the elements of rain and cold during a year when the winter overstayed its welcome. The contest organizer, Joe Valentine, showed the schools a variety of different soil types that are commonly found in the Northern Piedmont: soils formed from residual parent materials (Cambrian-Age gneiss, Triassic-Age sandstone and shale, and Jurassic-Age diabase and hornfels), all variably influenced by Pleistocene-Age aeolian processes.

The schools were also able to see soils formed in glacial outwash adjacent to Washington Crossing State Park and to ring diabase boulders that sounded like bells when struck with a hammer!

Virginia Tech won first place, followed by the University of Rhode Island (2nd), the University of Maryland (3rd), Purdue University (4th), and the University of Georgia (5th). Individual winners were: 1st—Bianca Peixoto (University of Rhode Island); 2nd—Julia Gillespie (Virginia Tech); 3rd—Nancy Krammerer (Penn State); 4th—Arthur Franke (Purdue University); 5th—Brian Maule (Northern Illinois University); 6th—Caitlin Hodges (University of Georgia); 7th—Tyler Witkowski (University of Maryland); 8th—Kyle Weber (University of Wisconsin–Platteville); 9th—Emily Salkind (Virginia Tech); and 10th—Zachary Sanders (University of Georgia). The top individual was Bianca Peixoto of the University of Rhode Island.

The University of Maryland won the Group Judging Contest, followed by Auburn University, Northern Illinois University, Texas A&M, and Purdue University.

Special thanks are given to Delaware Valley College for hosting this national contest one year earlier than originally scheduled. The students all learned a lot about the wide variety of soils that are encountered in the Northern Piedmont. While there is some loess in southeastern Pennsylvania, the schools should all see considerably aeolian parent materials at the 2015 National Collegiate Soil Judging Contest in Pine Bluff, AR.

doi:10.2134/csa2014-59-10-20

Top: 2014 Virginia Tech National Championship Soil Judging Team: Coach John Galbraith, Brian Nester, Emily Salkind, Nick Hebel, Stephanie O’Neil, Natasha Nahas, Julia Gillespie, Miranda Livas, Emily Baer, and Ruth Anderson. Bottom: The top individual was Bianca Peixoto of the University of Rhode Island (pictured with contest organizer, Joe Valentine).