



A Scientific Investment in America's Future

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December 14, 2010

Research and development is the lifeblood of the most innovative companies. To keep it flowing, we need to ensure that today's students will kindle an interest in science that leads them to become tomorrow's researchers. School science fairs can only help spark this enthusiasm -- but recent economic woes have led many of these fairs' big-name benefactors to cut or eliminate their support.

For the sake of the future discoveries that might drive tomorrow's best businesses, it's up to individuals like you and me to help fill that gap.

She blinded me with science!

The nationally renowned **Intel** (Nasdaq: INTC) International Science and Engineering Fair is the world's largest pre-college science fair. It features 1,500 youngsters selected from a pool of 6 million, and awards more than \$4 million in prizes and scholarships.

Many Intel fair participants qualify through smaller, regional fairs, some of which are now threatened. The 60-year-old St. Louis Science Fair, for instance, lost half its \$130,000 budget when **Pfizer** (NYSE: PFE) pulled out, leaving just **Monsanto** (NYSE: MON) as the major sponsor. Fair management is determined to keep it running, but that task will be difficult.

A little poking around online reveals more science fair dropouts. **Motorola** (NYSE: MOT) was a high-profile sponsor of the New York State Science and Engineering Fair in 2007, but it hasn't been listed as a benefactor since.

Eureka! A positive development

Thankfully, other companies seem unlikely to waver in their dedication to science fairs. (Even Pfizer may continue to some degree, since it has supported many fairs across the country.) **Broadcom** (Nasdaq: BRCM) has launched a new national middle-school competition, focusing on science, technology, engineering, and math.

In addition, new funds for fairs are coming from unusual sources: In 2009, **Netflix** (Nasdaq: NFLX) divided a \$1 million prize among several researchers who came up with an algorithm to improve video recommendations. One team from **AT&T** (NYSE: [T](#)) is donating part of its prize to the North Jersey Regional Science Fair.

Supporting science fairs is smart for many businesses; after all, these fairs could help develop their future employees.

Fools can help, too

The Motley Fool is doing its own part to boost education, lending a hand to the powerfully performing Thurgood Marshall Academy in our nation's capital. Learn more about the school, then consider supporting its mission. Even the comments you post on our discussion boards and articles will help us generate money for the Academy. By sounding off on the importance of science education or your favorite research-intensive investments today, you'll be helping us nurture tomorrow's researchers and engineers.