

# Excellence

## Center for Excellence in Education

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Kathy Liu,  
Co-Rickoid of the Year 2016

Summer may be over and the 33<sup>rd</sup> annual Research Science Institute (RSI) came to a close in August, but the memories she made during those six weeks at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) are far from distant for **Kathy Liu** of Salt Lake City, Utah. Liu was among 82 participants and one of two recipients of the “2016 Rickoid of the Year in honor of the Center for Excellence in Education (CEE) Founder and father of the nuclear Navy, the late Admiral H.G. Rickover. She shares the honor with Joshua Zhou of the North Carolina School of Science and Math in Durham, North Carolina.

“RSI was such an unforgettable experience,” Liu said. “Academically, the six weeks were a flurry of fascinating talks, experimentation, classes, tours, paper-writing, paper-editing, and presentations and all with invaluable feedback and support along the way. And the smaller

moments at RSI were just as indispensable to the entire experience. On my last night, I looked around the room and just remembered all of the late-night collaborations and conversations, smiling and laughing under the stunning Fourth of July fireworks, spontaneous games, and being intellectual or not-so-much in the dorm lounges, and realized that it all just culminates into one big treasured memory that is RSI.”

In addition to winning the “Rickoid of the Year,” voted on by her peers, Liu also won awards for both her written and oral presentations as chosen by the imminent panel of judges as part of the convocation of the 33<sup>rd</sup> annual RSI in early August.

Liu’s research, for which she won the presentation awards, involved, *Development of a Metal Halide Chemical Vapor Deposition Process for Photovoltaics and Thin Film Technology*. She was mentored by Dr. Roy G. Gordon with the Department of Chemistry & Chemical Biology, Harvard University, and Harvard University Ph.D. students with the Gordon Research Group, Christina Chang (RSI’07) and Rachel Heasley.

“Having the opportunity to work alongside my mentors on cutting-edge research in a formal research environment was incredibly inspiring,” she said. “One aspect that was really memorable for me was the collaborative, innovative spirit present between everyone in the lab that served to drive everyone forward. I learned that the question, ‘Can we do this?’ really just needs a ‘how’ in front of it. “I’m inspired more than ever to dive into my research because of my research experience at RSI, and will definitely always look up to my mentors throughout my pursuits.”



Kathy Liu with other RSI  
Top 10 Awardees at Final Presentations 2016

Liu is currently embarking on her senior year at West High School in Salt Lake City and keeping her options open as far as universities go. Wherever she goes, she definitely wants to pursue a career in STEM and make a difference in the world. For this, she knows that she is not alone.

“I feel like thanks to RSI, I now have a collection of lifelong role models and friends who share intellectual curiosity combined with extraordinary hard work, and that’s a really unique and powerful motivation and support system to have,” she said.

“I’d also like to continue working to make STEM opportunities accessible to everyone ... that, and possibly run a marathon,” Liu added.

For Liu, it seems it isn’t a matter of “can” she cross that finish line, but rather “when?”