

# *Virginia Tech Student and Coach Are International Soil Judging Champions*

*By Dr. John M. Galbraith*

Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences were well represented at the 3rd International Soil Judging Contest in Seropédica near Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on August 11, 2018.

The contest, sponsored by the International Union of Soil Science, had 48 students on 12 teams from 10 countries: United States, Brazil, Mexico, Taiwan, South Korea, Australia, Great Britain, South Africa, Spain, and Russia.

“The contest was the ultimate example of international goodwill and cooperation. The teams and coaches were there to learn about soils and learn about each other. We all shared a passion about soil science. Therefore, it was a competition within ourselves to learn as much as possible rather than to be better than anyone else. The educational opportunity was optimal for everyone.” according to coach John Galbraith.

The overall team champions were the USA team 2, coached by Dr. John Galbraith of Virginia Tech, followed by USA team 1, coached by Dr. Andrew Sherfy, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, and 3rd Place Spain, coached by Dr. Rosa Poch.

The group judging event was won by USA team 1, followed by USA team 2 and Spain. The individual champion was Georgianna (Anna) Scott, USA team 2 and Clemson University, Ben Smith, USA team 2 and Virginia Tech, and a four-way tie for 3rd between Braden Povah, USA team 2 and California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, David Gentry, USA team 2 and University of Tennessee-Knoxville, a student from Australia, and a student from Spain. Coach Galbraith is an Associate Professor in the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences, and Smith is a Junior from Chesterfield, VA majoring in Biological Systems Engineering.

Coach Galbraith stated “The contest was held in areas of extremely infertile soils leached of nutrients in what was once the Atlantic Rain Forest, but now dry pasture on moderately eroded hillslopes. The students learned how to interpret and classify tropical soil properties to make land use decisions. None of the USA students had been to Brazil or South America before, but they quickly learned the soils, hydrology, climate, and geology. They interacted well with all teams and learned how to be good ambassadors of their country and their university.”



**International champion USA soil Judging Team 2** (left to right) Braden Povah (tie-3rd individual), Cal Poly San Luis Obispo; Anna Scott, Clemson University (1st individual); Emma Thompson, Utah State University; Ben Smith, Virginia Tech (2nd individual); and Coach John Galbraith, Virginia Tech.





Students from the USA Team 2 and Great Britain practice judging soils in Seropédica Brazil at the 3rd International Soil Judging Contest.

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