



# Final Competition

**Tuesday, March 18, 2025**  
**6 to 8 p.m. | Reception included**

McInnes Room  
2nd Floor, Student Union Building  
6136 University Ave, Halifax



# Program

## Welcome and introductions

- Dr. Marty Leonard, Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies
- Elder Ann LaBillois, Dalhousie Elder-in-Residence

## Opening remarks

- Dr. Kim Brooks, President and Vice-Chancellor

## 3MT finalist presentations

## Judge deliberation and People's Choice Award voting

## Announcement of winners and closing remarks

- People's Choice Award: Dr. Estelle Joubert & Paul Doerwald
- Dr. Marty Leonard, Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies

Master of Ceremonies — Brett Ruskin

Brett Ruskin is a Senior Reporter for CBC News Network, appearing daily on television screens from coast to coast. He has experience working in newspaper and radio newsrooms in Halifax and Ottawa. Brett is known for covering a wide range of stories, from military operations to provincial politics for local scientific research. He's also known for quirkier occurrences, like when he helped a pregnant woman in a blizzard or was bitten by the groundhog, Shubenacadie Sam.



# About 3MT

## What is Three Minute Thesis?

The Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) is a skills development activity that challenges graduate students in research-based programs to explain their thesis or project to a non-specialist audience in just three minutes.

## What are the rules?

- A single static slide is permitted, presented from the beginning of the oration.
- No additional electronic media or props are permitted.
- Presentations are to be spoken word.
- Presentations have commenced when the presenter starts their presentation through movement or speech.
- Presentations are 3 minutes and competitors exceeding 3 minutes are disqualified.
- The decision of the adjudicating panel is final.

## What are the judges looking for?

### Comprehension and content

- Presentation provided clear motivation, background, and significance to the research question;
- Presentation clearly described the research strategy/design and the results/findings of the research; and
- Presentation clearly described the conclusions, outcomes and impact of the research.

### Engagement and communication

- The oration was delivered clearly, and the language was appropriate for a non-specialist audience;
- The PowerPoint slide was well-defined and enhanced the presentation; and
- The presenter conveyed enthusiasm for their research and captured and maintained the audience's attention.

# Judges

## Dr. Rustum Southwell



Dr. Rustum Southwell is Dalhousie University's ninth Chancellor.

One of Nova Scotia's most prominent community and business leaders, Dr. Southwell is best known as the founding CEO of the Black Business Initiative (BBI). Originally from Saint Kitts / Nevis, Southwell arrived in Halifax in 1972 and has been contributing to Nova Scotia's business landscape ever since.

Dr. Southwell began his business career in the food industry as one of the province's first Black franchise owners. After several years managing restaurants, he moved on to become executive director of the African Canadian Business Development Centre, precursor to BBI.

In 1996, Dr. Southwell became founding CEO of the BBI. His leadership has resulted in 25 years of unprecedented growth and impact. BBI has created over 1,500 jobs and has provided business training to over 1,000 aspiring entrepreneurs. Recently, he led the organization into its next phase of growth by expanding across the Atlantic Provinces. He is also renowned nationally and internationally for his work on Black Entrepreneurial and community development, as a co-founder of the FACE coalition and the Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative.

In addition to business excellence, Dr. Southwell has demonstrated his commitment to community. He has served as co-chair of the African Heritage Month Committee, and as the first chair of Hope Blooms Youth Ventures Inc. He has also served on many boards including the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, the Waterfront Development Corporation (now Develop Nova Scotia), and United Way Halifax. He served as a member of the Board of Governors of Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), the Black Loyalist Heritage Society, and the Community Consultative Committee of the Halifax Stanfield International Airport Authority (HSIAA).

Among his many accolades are the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond and Platinum Jubilee Medals. He has received honorary doctorate degrees from Dalhousie and Saint Mary's universities, and an honorary diploma from NSCC. Recently, he was inducted into the Nova Scotia Business Hall of Fame and the Order of Nova Scotia.

## Dr. Graham Gagnon



Graham Gagnon, PhD, P.Eng., is the Acting Vice President of Research & Innovation at Dalhousie University. A distinguished environmental engineer and dedicated member of the Dalhousie community, Dr. Gagnon has been an active leader at the university for over 25 years, holding key roles including Dean of Architecture and Planning and Associate Vice-President Research. As Director of the Centre for Water Resources Studies, he leads groundbreaking research in water quality and treatment and supports industrial and community partnerships that have improved water security in Atlantic Canada and beyond. Among key successes has been his role supporting the formation of the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority, Canada's first Indigenous-led water utility.

Dr. Gagnon has been both a Canada Research Chair and Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) Industrial Research Chair, underscoring his leadership in applied research. His significant contributions to engineering were recognized in 2024 with his induction as a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Engineering. In 2024, he was also named a member of the Canadian Infrastructure Council, an 11-person team of experts tasked by the Government of Canada to support long-term core infrastructure planning and decision-making.

With a commitment to advancing equity in Dalhousie's research and innovation ecosystem, Dr. Gagnon is focused on expanding research opportunities, strengthening community and industry partnerships, and ensuring that Dalhousie innovation delivers meaningful benefits to Nova Scotia, Canada and beyond.

## Kristan Hines



Kristan is passionate about helping people achieve their goals – and this is evident in everything she does. For over 20 years, she has tackled some of Atlantic Canada's most compelling challenges and provided counsel to senior leaders in government and industry across Canada.

A trusted advisor and problem-solver, Kristan brings perspective to the conversation – drawing on her understanding of the Atlantic Canadian landscape, her vast network, and her experience as a political advisor on Parliament Hill and Chief of Staff to a former Premier of Nova Scotia.

As NATIONAL's Senior Vice President of Corporate and Public Affairs, Kristan brings together experts in strategic communications, government relations, crisis management, and public engagement from across the NATIONAL network to navigate complex issues and position clients for success.

A proud graduate of Acadia and Dalhousie, Kristan is currently the Vice-Chair of the Dalhousie University Board of Governors. In addition, she is Vice-Chair of the Phoenix Youth Programs Board, and a member of the Downtown Halifax Business Commission Board of Directors.

# Finalists

**Cédric Blais, PhD, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology**

What is your DNA really for? Unpacking the DNA Wallet

**Ahmed Ramadan, PhD, Biomedical Engineering**

Guiding the Wave: Light-Based Heart Therapies

**Ebube Thelma Sunny-Ekhalume, MSc, Electrical and Computer Engineering**

Energy from Every Move!

**Loveth Ovedje, PhD, Law**

When the Nets Come Up Empty

**Caitlin McCavour, PhD, Plant, Food, and Environmental Sciences**

From the Ground Up

**Alexa Wilson, PhD, Microbiology and Immunology**

The Herpesvirus Escape Plan — Newly Revealed!

**Jasmine Friedrich Yap, MSc, Physiotherapy**

Snap, Crackle, Pop! Reducing Fracture Risk in Home Care

**Emily McLean, MES, School for Resource and Environmental Studies**

Sticky Signals: What Honey Reveals about our Environment

**Sharon Vogel, PhD, English**

Servants of God and Slaves of the Devil? Witchcraft, Rulership, and Skepticism on the Early Modern Stage

**Madeline Kwan, MSc, Health and Human Performance**

Prescription PaRX: Nature is the Greatest Medicine for All

**Kappeeran Venkatesan, MSc, Plant, Food, and Environmental Sciences**

How Climate Change Shapes the Future of Late Blight Disease?

**Joshua Ojile, MSc, Medical Neuroscience**

Brain Leak Alert: Tracking the Invisible Breach

# Prizes

## First place

- \$1,000
- The opportunity to represent Dalhousie at the Eastern Regional 3MT Competition hosted by Memorial University of Newfoundland this year.

## Second place

- \$500

## Third place

- \$250

## People's Choice Award

- \$500 (in addition to any other prize money received)

## Remaining finalists

- \$100

2025 People's Choice Award generously sponsored by  
Dr. Estelle Joubert & Paul Doerwald



# Thank you to our supporters!



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## **Dalhousie Copyright Office**

Jaclyn Chambers Page, Copyright Services Specialist

## **Dalhousie Libraries**

Lindsay McNiff, Learning & Instruction Librarian

## **Dalhousie Office of Commercialization and Industry Engagement**

Adam Haller, Managing Director, Commercialization and Licensing

## **Dalhousie Studying for Success Program**

Grace McNutt, Study for Success Coach (PhD Candidate, History)

## **Dalhousie Writing Centre**

Janice MacDonald Eddington, Coordinator, Writing Centre

Dr. Adam Auch, Writing Advisor

Dr. Vanessa Lent, International Student Writing Advisor

Writing Centre tutors

## **NATIONAL Public Relations**

Jane Taber, Senior Vice President, Public Affairs

Kristan Hines, Senior Vice President, Public Affairs

Rachel Cunningham, Senior Consultant

## **Previous Finalists as Coaches**

Dina Rogers (MSc, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology)

Eniko Zsoldos (PhD Candidate, Chemistry)