

**LEMELSON**  **N-MIT**

*Celebrating invention, inspiring youth*

**Lemelson-MIT Student Prize**

**APPLICATION INFORMATION**

**Apply Now for the 2020 Lemelson-MIT Student Prize**  
**Initial Application Deadline: September 27, 2019**

To learn more and to start your application, visit: <http://lemelson.mit.edu/studentprize>

The Lemelson-MIT Program is searching nationwide for undergraduate teams and individual graduate students who have developed technology-based inventions in healthcare, transportation and mobility, food/water and agriculture, and consumer devices. Graduate students win \$15,000 in recognition of their portfolio of inventions, and undergraduate teams win \$10,000 for their invention. In addition, winners will be included in a national media campaign, and receive exposure to investment and business communities, and a paid trip for an award celebration (EurekaFest) in June 2020.

**Eligibility:** The competition is open to teams (2-5 people) of undergraduate students with one invention, and individual graduate students with two or more inventions. Applicants must be full-time, matriculated, degree-seeking students in the spring semester of 2020 at any U.S. college or university. Postdocs, audit students, and alumni are not eligible. Applicants must have a tested prototype of their invention(s). Patents are encouraged but not required.

**How to Apply & Prize Categories:** The Initial Application must be completed online by September 27, 2019. All eligible applicants who meet the Initial Application criteria will be invited to complete the Category Application, which is due October 18, 2019. The Student Prize categories are: 1) “**Cure it!**” for inventions that involve healthcare, 2) “**Eat it!**” for inventions that involve food/water or agriculture, 3) “**Move it!**” for inventions that involve transportation or mobility, and 4) “**Use it!**” for inventions that involve consumer devices – defined as tangible consumer products where the end users are retail customers who would purchase the product for use in their daily life. Submitted technology-based inventions must fit into one of the Student Prize categories. For graduate students, only your primary invention must fit into one of the categories. If you are unsure about which category to apply to, contact Janell Ciemiecki, Awards Program Administrator, at [janelle@mit.edu](mailto:janelle@mit.edu).

**Selection Criteria:** Applicants will be judged on the overall inventiveness of their work, the potential for commercialization/adoption of the invention(s), the systems and design thinking approach applied to the development of the invention(s), youth mentoring and leadership experience, and faculty recommendations.

**Contact:** Janell Ciemiecki, Awards Program Administrator, Lemelson-MIT Program  
Email: [janelle@mit.edu](mailto:janelle@mit.edu)

## **Detailed Instructions for the 2020 Lemelson-MIT Student Prize** **Initial Application Deadline: September 27, 2019**

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### **Overview**

The 2020 Lemelson-MIT Student Prize features a two-part online application process, the Initial Application and the Category Application, using the SurveyMonkey Apply applicant portal. All applicants need to create a SurveyMonkey Apply account by clicking the “Apply Now” button on the Student Prize [website](#). For undergraduate teams, the person submitting the application will be considered the team lead and the main point of contact for anything application-related. Category-specific screening committees review applications to select finalists and a prestigious national jury selects winners. Details appear below:

### **Initial Application Deadline: Friday, September 27, 2019 at 11:59pm ET**

The Initial Application is a rolling application with a final deadline of **September 27, 2019**. If applicants meet all eligibility and Initial Application criteria, they will be invited to submit the Category Application within two weeks of submitting the Initial Application. Applicants are encouraged to submit materials BEFORE the September deadline, as doing so will facilitate an early review of materials AND grant earlier access to the Category Application if eligibility requirements and criteria are met, thereby giving more time to complete the Category Application.

### **Category Application Deadline: Friday, October 18, 2019 at 11:59pm ET**

Eligible applicants will be invited via email to submit the Category Application. All Category Application materials, including the faculty recommendation letter, must be received no later than **October 18, 2019**.

### **Finalist Round and Announcement of Winners**

Applicants selected as Finalists will be notified that they are advancing to the Finalist round by December 19, 2019, and will be required to submit additional materials due on **January 15, 2020**. See Finalist Application details on page 6. Winners will be notified in late-February 2020 and a public announcement will occur in late-April 2020. Awards will be made at EurekaFest, held in mid-to late-June 2020 (winners are required to attend; for undergraduate teams, at least one team member must attend). Attendance at EurekaFest is at the Lemelson-MIT Program’s expense.

*Note: the dates listed above and on the following pages are subject to change.*

## **Application Submission Guidelines**

As a courtesy to the distinguished individuals who volunteer their time to help make the Student Prize possible, we ask that you strictly observe all of the guidelines for submission. Please note, applications that do not follow instructions will be disqualified from consideration. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Once a SurveyMonkey Apply account is created, applicants will complete the Initial Application.

### **Initial Application requirements include:**

- Indicate the **Prize Type** (Undergraduate Team or Individual Graduate Student) and **Category** (“Cure it!,” “Eat it!,” “Move it!” or “Use it!”)
- **Biographical Information and Team Member Listing** (undergraduates)
- **Invention Description(s)** in non-technical terms (must have a tested prototype)
- **Resume or CV** (PDF upload)
- **Slide Deck Presentation** (5-slide PowerPoint or PDF presentation upload about the invention(s), which must include visual evidence of a tested prototype. Photos are preferred, but if you embed a video, please also provide a link to it on the slides)

All eligible applicants meeting the Initial Application criteria will be invited via email to submit the Category Application. *Note: the character counts below refer to the maximum allotment for that section's text box response in SurveyMonkey Apply. Word counts given are an approximation.*

### **Category Application requirements include:**

- **Faculty Letter of Recommendation**

One letter of recommendation is required from a faculty member, research-scientist staff, or advisor/mentor who is familiar with your work. Letters must be requested via the SurveyMonkey Apply applicant portal, which triggers an email request to your letter writer with a unique link for them to upload the letter to your application. We HIGHLY recommend that you request this letter as early as possible. Once requested, follow up with your letter writer to ensure that they received the SurveyMonkey Apply email (note that these emails can sometimes go to spam). Each letter should be addressed to the Lemelson-MIT Student Prize Committee, limited to two pages or less, and include the following:

  - Describe the student/team members
  - State the student's/students' role in developing the invention(s)
  - Describe the significance of the invention(s) to the field
  - Define the state-of-the-art status in the area of the invention(s)
  - Describe the potential implications of the student's/students' work

- **Cover Letter** (maximum 9,000 characters/approx. 1,500 words for undergraduate teams and 6,000 characters/approx. 1,000 words for individual graduate students)

Provide the reader with a brief snapshot about who you are and your main focus and inspiration as an inventor or team of inventors. Be sure to include details about your background, including education and any relevant job experience. Undergraduate students, please include background details for each inventor on the team.

- **Description of Inventiveness** (single invention for undergraduate teams – maximum 6,000 characters/approx. 1,000 words; portfolio of two or more inventions for individual graduate students – maximum 12,000 characters/approx. 2,000 words)

Address all of the following as it relates to your invention(s). Graduate students, address these aspects with a focus on your primary invention but be sure to include details about your secondary invention (and any additional inventions, if applicable) as you see fit.

- Define the problem or need that your invention(s) is/are trying to solve and explain how your invention(s) offers solutions.
    - How did the problem come to the inventor's/inventors' attention?
    - How did the inventor/inventors decide that this was an important problem to solve?
    - What solutions were attempted to solve the problem and how were they developed and tested?
  - What makes your invention(s) novel?
  - What makes your invention(s) useful?
  - How does/do your invention(s) improve upon prior technology or processes?
  - What were the roles and responsibilities of each inventor with regard to the invention(s)? If you have worked in team environments, specify your individual role(s) in developing the invention(s): for graduate students working in a large lab or as part of a team, outline your *individual* contributions to developing your inventions; for undergraduate teams, identify the roles and responsibilities of each team member in regard to the invention.
- **Description of Potential Commercialization or Adoption** (maximum 3,000 characters/approx. 500 words)

Describe how your invention(s) could be commercialized or possesses the potential for adoption, including any steps that you have taken to achieve this or plan to take in the future. Graduate students, address these aspects with a focus

on your primary invention but also include details about your secondary invention as you see fit.

- **Description of Systems & Design Thinking** (maximum 1,800 characters/about 300 words for undergraduate teams and 3,000 characters/approx. 500 words for individual graduate students)

A *systems thinking* approach means viewing your invention(s) as a collection of separate parts and processes that make up a larger system or whole. This includes the design, materials sourcing, manufacturing/building, and end-of-life of your invention(s), and the decisions that informed each phase. *Design thinking* is a multi-step process for innovating that generally involves understanding a need, defining a solution, prototyping and testing, and refining or iterating your solution. As appropriate, provide a description of both your systems and design thinking related to your invention(s), including any economic, social/community, and environmental impacts resulting from the invention's/inventions' development and its use. Graduate students, address these aspects with a focus on your primary invention but be sure to include details about your secondary invention as you see fit.

For additional information on sustainability-focused inventing, we encourage you to review these helpful [toolkits](#).

- **Description of Youth Mentoring and Leadership Experience** (maximum 3,000 characters/approx. 500 words)

Describe your/your team's youth mentoring and leadership experience, addressing the following:

- How have you mentored youth or others?
- How have you served as a leader or leaders?
- What was the impetus for your involvement in these activities and what did you learn?
- Be sure to touch on any community outreach activities, academic and co-curricular.
- For graduate students: any activities that go above and beyond mentoring and advising undergraduates/lab members that would generally be expected as part of the graduate student experience should be highlighted.
- For undergraduate teams, please list individual youth mentoring and leadership examples for each team member. If applicable, you may also list examples of youth mentoring and leadership that you have conducted together as a team.

**Optional** – up to two supplemental documents/media uploads are permitted. While not required, if you have additional materials that would strengthen your application, we encourage you to include them. These materials could include PDF's of articles or news coverage, a list of links to other sources, photos, diagrams, videos, YouTube links, or even additional letters of recommendation.

### **Guidelines for Finalists**

A small number of graduate and undergraduate team applicants will be advanced as finalists in each category. Applicants selected to advance past the Category Application round to the Finalist round will be asked to produce and submit a **two-minute** video by **Wednesday, January 15, 2020**. The video must describe your invention (primary invention for graduate students) and adhere to the content guidelines set forth by the Lemelson-MIT Program. Creativity is encouraged! **DO NOT USE ANY COPYRIGHTED MATERIALS** (music, images, video, etc.) without the explicit written permission for use from the copyright holder. Finalists will also be asked to submit **two additional letters of recommendation** and a headshot or team photo. Detailed Finalist Application instructions will be sent to all finalists in December if advanced.

*For those applicants who are selected as Student Prize winners, some (non-confidential) information presented in their applications will be used to prepare public press materials.*

**Contact:** Janell Ciemiecki, Awards Program Administrator, Lemelson-MIT Program.  
Email: [janellc@mit.edu](mailto:janellc@mit.edu)

## **2020 Lemelson-MIT Student Prize: Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Initial Application Deadline: September 27, 2019**

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#### ***What are the goals of the Lemelson-MIT Student Prize?***

The Lemelson-MIT Student Prize seeks to serve as a catalyst for burgeoning inventors. Prizes are awarded annually to inventive graduate students and teams of undergraduate students from any college or university in the United States. The award publicity helps to expose winners to technology, engineering, science, business, and investment communities.

#### ***What qualifies as an invention for the purposes of this competition?***

The Lemelson-MIT Program considers an invention to be a new technology, product, or process developed by the student applicant that is unique, useful, and solves a real-world problem with an identified user. Strong applications have evidence (data) supporting that the invention works as intended to, including engagement with users during the evaluation of the invention.

#### ***What is a tested prototype?***

A prototype must be tested and functional. It should work as designed beyond proof of concept models. Evidence of the functional prototype can be data from lab, human subjects testing or consumer products testing that has been collected and analyzed. Applicants need to provide evidence that the functional prototype performs as intended.

Prototypes do not need to be commercially available but they should be commercially viable. Applicants are not expected to develop prototypes past early stages nor do they need to present a business plan. Commercialization potential is however a criterion of the competition, and prototypes further along in development that exhibit strong commercialization potential may be rated higher than early stage inventions.

#### ***What does it mean to be “an undergraduate student-founded and led team”?***

An undergraduate student-founded and led team is one in which the idea for the invention was generated by an undergraduate student who then built and is actively leading a team of 2-5 students (majority of whom are undergraduates) to develop and commercialize that invention. Graduate students can be part of the undergraduate team provided the majority of team members are undergraduates. The person submitting the team’s application will be considered the team lead and the main point of contact for anything application-related.

#### ***Are applicants required to have any patents?***

No, applicants are not required to have any patents. However, the Lemelson-MIT Program strongly encourages applicants to discuss in their application any intellectual property (IP) that they have filed or plan to file and correctly attribute ownership (i.e. candidates should own the IP of any invention entered into the competition). The supplemental materials section is an excellent place to submit patent abstracts. The

strongest applications over the years have featured patented inventions or inventions involved in the patenting process.

***Does the candidate forfeit intellectual property rights by submitting an application?***

The Lemelson-MIT Program asks screening committees and the judging panel to acknowledge that student applications are distributed solely for the candidacy of the Lemelson-MIT Student Prize, and should not be reproduced for other purposes. Candidates are advised to consult their school's Intellectual Property policies as directed by their Technology Licensing Office, and the United States Patent and Trademark Office to ensure protection of their intellectual property, if applicable.

***Are winners required to use the award money for research?***

No, the money is an unrestricted cash gift but could certainly be used for future research or development of their prototype(s).

***What is required of winners?***

Winners are asked to participate in media opportunities arranged by the Lemelson-MIT Program to celebrate their win and recognize their work. Winners are required to attend EurekaFest, the Lemelson-MIT Program's annual multi-day celebration of the inventive spirit, which is held in June of the award year. Undergraduate team winners must have at least one team member in attendance. Attendance at EurekaFest is at the Lemelson-MIT Program's expense. The Lemelson-MIT Program may request winners to participate in future public education and press activities as applicable.

***When is the deadline to apply?***

The Initial Application deadline is Friday, September 27, 2019. Applicants can apply any time before that date and are encouraged to do so, as it will enable earlier access to the Category Application if all criteria are met. The Category Application deadline is Friday, October 18, 2019. For those who are advanced to the Finalist round, the Finalist Application materials are due on Wednesday, January 15, 2020. *See page 2 for detailed deadline information.*

***Who are the judges?***

All applicants who meet the Initial Application requirements will be advanced to the Category Application round. Following that, there is a two-tiered judging process:

**Category Application round:** Screening committees who have expertise in the candidates' field areas (i.e. the Student Prize categories: healthcare, consumer products, transportation and mobility, and food/water and agriculture).

**Finalist round:** A national jury consisting of a panel of experts from a variety of disciplines such as mechanical engineering, bioengineering, physics, medicine, finance, transportation and mobility, and food/water and agriculture.

***What criteria are used to judge the candidates?***

Applicants will be evaluated by category-specific screening committees and a prestigious national jury based on a range of criteria including:

- Description of inventiveness (single invention for undergraduate teams and

- portfolio of inventions for graduate students)
- Potential or realized commercialization/adoption of the invention(s)
- Ability to articulate a systems and design thinking approach to the invention process
- Scope of youth mentoring and leadership experience
- Supporting letters of recommendation
- *Finalists only: two-minute finalist video*

No criterion is considered paramount. Judges are asked to take a holistic view of each candidate with respect to the goals of the Lemelson-MIT Student Prize.

### ***What makes an excellent application?***

An excellent application is well-presented, complete, and follows instructions. Strong applications feature truly inventive technology and make a compelling case based on the selection criteria listed above. For specific advice on how best to complete your application and clearly communicate about your invention(s), we encourage you to set up a phone call with Janell Ciemiecki, Awards Program Administrator, at [janellc@mit.edu](mailto:janellc@mit.edu) to discuss your application in detail prior to applying.

### ***How many Student Prizes are awarded each year?***

There will be up to a total of eight prizes awarded in 2020:

- "Cure it!" category: one \$15,000 prize for one graduate student, and one \$10,000 prize for a team of undergraduate students.
- "Eat it!" category: one \$15,000 prize for one graduate student, and one \$10,000 prize for a team of undergraduate students.
- "Move it!" category: one \$15,000 prize for one graduate student, and one \$10,000 prize for a team of undergraduate students.
- "Use it!" category: one \$15,000 prize for one graduate student, and one \$10,000 prize for a team of undergraduate students.

### ***I would like to apply but my project does not fit into any of this year's categories. What can I do?***

The Lemelson-MIT Program hopes to award prizes in additional categories in future years. For now, applicants must choose one of the four current categories: "Cure it!," "Eat it!," "Move it!" or "Use it!" For graduate students, at least your primary invention must fit into one of the four prize categories. If you are unsure if your invention fits into one of the categories, contact Janell Ciemiecki, Awards Program Administrator, at [janellc@mit.edu](mailto:janellc@mit.edu).

### ***Is the prize given to college students with proposed work/inventions?***

No, this is not an idea competition or funding pitch for yet-to-be developed projects. Submissions must be existing tech-based inventions with tested and working prototypes, having potential for real commercialization, implementation or greater impact.

**Contact:** Janell Ciemiecki, Awards Program Administrator, Lemelson-MIT Program.  
Email: [janellc@mit.edu](mailto:janellc@mit.edu)