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Clarendon County School District JROTC Team Earns Trip to National Championship in Washington, D.C.

Manning High School Air Force JROTC Earns Trip to Nationals

Manning, South Carolina – In a competition that began with more than 5,000 teams from around the world, four cadets from Manning High School have risen to the top, earning a coveted place at the 2026 JROTC Leadership & Academic Bowl Championship in Washington, D.C.

After surviving two fast-paced and highly competitive online rounds, the Manning High School JROTC Academic Team, made up of Jania Scammell, Brooklynn Burgess, Cierra Utterback, and McKenzie Dooley secured their place among the top JROTC Leadership & Academic Bowl teams in the nation. Their performance earned them a trip to compete at The Catholic University of America June 12–16, 2026.

Out of 5,163 JROTC teams worldwide, only a select few advanced to the national stage.

“We are extremely proud of our cadets for making it to the National Championship in Washington, D.C. This achievement is a shining example of what Manning High School represents. Every morning and afternoon, I remind our students and staff that 'Manning High School is a great place to work and an even better place to learn.' Over the last few years, our focus has been on standards-based learning. At Manning High School, we are committed to equipping our students with the knowledge they need to be career or college ready upon graduation. We are grateful for organizations like JROTC Leadership & Academic Challenge Bowl and USAA, which provide opportunities for our students to demonstrate their learning and explore post-graduation pathways. My staff and I could not be prouder of this team of ladies for reaching this milestone.” stated Dr. Kelvin Lemon, Principal of Manning High School.

The academic competition tested cadets on core subjects including math, science, and language arts. Leadership Teams were tested on leadership values, skills, and citizenship. All teams were challenged far beyond the classroom, with being tested on current events, financial literacy, and critical thinking under time pressure.

Questions focused on financial literacy, sponsored by the USAA Educational Foundation, were integrated directly into the competition, reinforcing real-world skills alongside academic knowledge.

In total, 108 teams from 98 high schools across 43 states, as well as programs in Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and DoDEA schools in Japan, advanced to the 2025–2026 JROTC Leadership and Academic Bowl (JLAB) Championship.

Texas led the nation with 21 advancing teams, followed by California with 10. Florida and Tennessee each advanced eight teams, while Alabama and Georgia contributed six each, highlighting the depth and competitiveness of this year’s competition.

The JLAB Championship is one of the most prestigious leadership & academic competitions exclusively for JROTC cadets. Designed to promote scholarship, teamwork, service, and leadership excellence, the event brings together the nation’s most driven student leaders.

For Manning High School, this achievement represents more than a trip to Washington. It reflects months of preparation, discipline, teamwork, and the kind of leadership development JROTC programs aim to build.

About the JROTC Leadership & Academic Bowl (JLAB)

The JROTC Leadership & Academic Bowl is a nationally recognized competition sponsored by the U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, and U.S. Coast Guard, and organized by the College Options Foundation. For over two decades, the



Foundation has supported the academic growth of JROTC cadets through competitions, college readiness resources, exam preparation tools, and admissions guidance.

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