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**Maria-Veronica Ciocanel\***, ciocanel.1@mbi.osu.edu. *Insights and strategies for starting local Mathematical Contest for Modeling contests.*

As an undergraduate student, I had the opportunity to participate in the Math Contest for Modeling (MCM) and to receive a Finalist award. The weekend spent with my team was intense but made me realize that I enjoy solving applied problems and contributed to my decision to pursue a PhD in Applied Mathematics. In this presentation, I will discuss my experience with founding local MCM competitions at Brown University and at The Ohio State University that introduce undergraduate students to smaller scale versions of the contest. I will particularly focus on strategies for building strong student teams, for establishing the contest as a recurring event, and for taking advantage of the institution's resources (such as SIAM student chapters). The local contests offer ample opportunities for feedback and student training and can be framed as competitions where the top teams are sponsored to participate in the international contests. Students report enjoying the intensive contest experience and teams that won Outstanding Winner awards in the ICM were excited to present their problem solutions to undergraduate and graduate students. In addition, I have found that students who participate in the MCM/ICM contests are more likely to seek research experiences during their college years. (Received September 12, 2018)