

Greetings,

First, I hope that you, your family, and your close acquaintances are making the best of this difficult time. I know, however, that some of you have almost certainly been more directly affected by COVID-19 than others, so to you I want to express my sincerest hope that you are able to see light at the end of your tunnel.

Although we still do not know for sure exactly what Science Olympiad will look like in 2021, there have been some meetings and preliminary discussions at both the national and state levels, and I want to bring you up to date on what we know at this point.

First, the Science Olympiad national office has decided to replay the 2020 rules for the 2021 season, something that they are calling the “2020 Rules Replay.” This means that we will be running all the same 2020 events again in 2021. The Rules Replay does not mean that there will be no changes to the rules at all. As in every year when events return from the previous year, rules may be adjusted in response to information collected through the Rules Clarification and FAQ process. Teams can expect revised rules for Detector Building, Ping Pong Parachute, Protein Modeling, and the National Bird List as well as tweaks, adjustments, and clarifications to other events. These revised and updated rules will be previewed and discussed at the 2020 Summer Institute in July, which is attended by the executive board of Science Olympiad, most state directors, and many regional directors. **All teams will need to download a new copy of the 2021 Science Olympiad Rules when they are released on Tuesday, September 8, 2020 to ensure that they are using the most current rules to prepare for competitions in the 2021 season.**

Secondly, the Science Olympiad Executive Board has created an “Innovation Task Force” to investigate virtual and digital ways to play. The Task Force will be led by Dr. Alan Chalker, Science Olympiad alum, National Physics Rules Committee Chair, National Tournament Coordinator and Director of Strategic Programs at the Ohio Supercomputer Center. The Task Force will monitor all the latest statistics and plans from the CDC, HHS and Education Week as well as trackers for STEM competitions, sports leagues and digital education and then report to the Science Olympiad Board. This will allow Science Olympiad to develop scenarios that will help us move forward in this new, uncharted territory so that by the start of the 2021 season, there will be options that can work in every state and at every regional.

As for dates for the FAU Regional Events, until we have more clarity on exactly what the situation looks like in the coming months, dates cannot be set. The hope is that dates will be similar to previous years, with Division B and C being held in mid to late February, and Elementary being held in late April or early May. But it is still just too early to know.

We realize that Science Olympiad teams expect new events every year, however this year is clearly an anomaly, and the decision to replay events from 2020 was not made lightly. We thank you for your understanding as we all try and deal with this sudden change, upheaval and disappointment. As more information about the 2021 season becomes available it will be posted on the Science Olympiad’s national website (soinc.org). I will also update the FAU website (http://science.fau.edu/science_olympiad/) when I have new information, however for now there is nothing new there to look at other than this letter. I look forward to seeing you first at coach workshops, and then at tournaments once the situation and factors around the COVID-19 pandemic stabilize.

Regards,

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