



INSPIRING YOUNG MINDS

Science Olympiad at Wayne State University

Students in urban areas like Detroit often face disparities in their access to quality education and professional enrichment opportunities, particularly those in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). There are many career discovery programs that expose students to quality opportunities in STEM fields, but these programs are customarily limited to the schools that can afford to participate in them. Every student should have the opportunity to explore their educational and professional curiosities regardless of their economic status or that of their school district.

To help level the educational playing field and foster diversity, equity and inclusion in STEM industries, we must support programs that allow students in economically disadvantaged communities to access pathways to post-secondary education and begin transformative careers as accomplished scientists and researchers.

Bridging the gap

Science Olympiad is a multifaceted enrichment program that drives student success inside and outside the classroom through co-curricular activities designed to promote exploration, problem-solving and creativity in all areas of science. By combining the physics, engineering and chemistry disciplines, Science Olympiad encourages an array of students to get involved in experiential group learning. Through educational programming and inquiry-based activities, Science Olympiad aims to:

- Create a passion for learning science at county, state and national levels with an emphasis on teamwork and a commitment to excellence
- Bring science to life, show how science works, emphasize problem-solving aspects of science and foster understanding of science concepts
- Develop collaborative learning strategies among students
- Promote high levels of success and achievement in the study of the sciences
- Stimulate student interest in STEM careers

Wayne State University is one of Michigan's most diverse college campuses and is the top Michigan institution with a Carnegie R1 classification – which denotes the highest level of research activity – in social mobility. This makes the pursuit of equity among educational opportunities for our students one of the university's greatest priorities.



Toward an inclusive opportunity

As a key part of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences' work within the community to increase diversity and equity across all STEM opportunities and fields, the Department of Chemistry, in conjunction with other science departments in the college, hosts the regional Science Olympiad competition each year. Science Olympiad competitions are the academic equivalent of an athletic track meet. At the conclusion of the regular competition, which consists of a series of team events, medals and trophies are awarded to the highest-performing teams, and the best three teams are invited to compete at the state tournament.

In 2023, Wayne State hosted 15 middle school teams and 16 high school teams – amounting to more than 440 students throughout metro Detroit – for the Wayne and Monroe County Regional Science Olympiad Tournament. Teams of up to 15 students participated in events focusing on a wide range of activities within the life, physical, earth and technology sciences.

In addition to being the first Science Olympiad tournament held on campus, the event provided the university an opportunity to recruit and reward ambitious students interested in pursuing a STEM education. Through a drawing, Wayne State awarded 10 scholarships of \$1,000 each to competing high school gold medalists, if the students enrolled full time at the university for the fall 2023 term.

In 2024, Wayne State will again host the regional Science Olympiad tournament, but we need philanthropic support and partnership from our community before we can regularly provide students with this on-campus opportunity.



The future of STEM education awaits

The Department of Chemistry requires at least \$20,000 each year to run Science Olympiad and engage and compensate the dedicated students, mentors and coaches who work hard throughout tournament preparation and competition. Your support helps us reach and recruit more students in economically challenged schools throughout Michigan who are interested in exploring STEM fields of study. No matter the size of your gift, you can be sure its impact will be felt by generations of STEM leaders to come.



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