

News

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Virginia Tech hosts Science Olympiad to promote active learning

Kevin Sandler, news staff writer Feb 3, 2019



Two students working on their science project at the Science Olympiad, Feb. 2, 2019.

Kevin Sandler / Collegiate Times

On Saturday, Feb. 2, 2019, Science Olympiad at Virginia Tech hosted its second Science Olympiad Tournament, with over 200 high school students competing from counties across Virginia, as well as a school in Pennsylvania.

Science Olympiad is a series of science tournaments held across the United States aimed at improving students' problem solving skills, teamwork and understanding of science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields for the youth.

Trisha Deshmukh, a Virginia Tech junior majoring in biological sciences, started the organization for Science Olympiad last year.

"I competed in Science Olympiad in high school and middle school," Deshmukh, who is currently the president of this organization at Virginia Tech, said. "I always enjoyed going to invitational and regional tournaments. That was always my favorite part of competing."

This year, with more volunteers, officers and schools competing, Virginia Tech hosted the regional tournament McBryde Hall, Torgersen Hall, Hahn Hall South, and War Memorial Hall, and Squires Student Center.

From 8:45 a.m. to nearly 2 p.m., students competed in testing events such as astronomy, fossils and forensics.

In War Memorial Hall, high school students competed in engineering-based events including flying a plane that they built or testing a boomilever, which is, essentially, the arm of a crane.

Katriona Lane, a junior majoring in biology and spanish, as well the communications chair and volunteer coordinator for Science Olympiad at Virginia Tech, hopes that the tournament will resonate with the students.

"I want them to have fun and to learn how to work in a team and how to problem solve," Lane said. "It's a life skill that's pretty important to have."

David Parks, the chair of outreach for Science Olympiad, says that the competition provides the students a chance to demonstrate their skills, and that his favorite part about the experience is seeing the planning coming together.

“To see everything that we’ve done to prepare Virginia Tech for the event and then see everything that the students have done to prepare makes it all worth it.” Parks said.

Virginia Tech aided the organization by hosting the event, by providing monetary donations, supplies or volunteers coming from the Center for Enhancement of Engineering Diversity (CEED), the College of Science, as well as the Cure and Da Vinci Living and Learning Communities.



According to the competing students, many claimed to gain invaluable experience from the tournament that they hope to use in their future careers.

“It’s a learning experience,” said North Pocono High School student Shivani Patel. “You are potentially building up the experience of what you want to do later in life.”

Juniors Harrison Ponczak and Kaitlyn Phan from South County High School say that competing today gave them confidence in themselves.

“I learned how to put my all into projects, and I haven't really done that before Science Olympiad,” Phan said.

North Pocono High School placed first in the tournament overall.

Additionally, spirits were high and encouragement was strong, according to junior Praneeth Uppar from John Champe High School.

“You can see how loud we are when we are getting awards, it's a culture where you can support each other,” Uppar said.

