**NOTES FOR A.I.Ch.E. SCIENCE FAIR JUDGES**

Science & Engineering Fair of Houston (SEFH) Special Awards Judging by the

 American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AIChE), South Texas Section (STS)

 Special Awards Judging, Saturday, February 25, 2017

**IMPORTANT NOTE**: We will gather in the Special Awards Judging Room around 12:30 p.m. Please arrive a little early to find the room. We get instructions and do planning between 12:30 and 1:00. Judging officially begins at 1:00. **If you have problems on the day of the event, call Matt Kolodney at 713-471-8956 (cell).**

Thank you for your interest in volunteering to judge the science fair for AIChE. As well as performing a service that is very important to our organization, I think you will spend an interesting afternoon talking to many intelligent and accomplished young persons, as well as your colleagues at STS. Our goal is to have about fifteen judges, five for each of the three student age categories. This provides a range of opinions, enables us to complete the judging in two hours, and keeps the judging from being a burden on any one person.

**Please RSVP well in advance if convenient**. This isn’t necessary for everybody, but is very helpful for those who can. If the response isn’t sufficient, I need to call members a few days before to ensure we have enough judges.

**COMMUNICATIONS AND PRIVACY OF JUDGES: If you send Matt your cell phone number, we’ll add it to the confidential judges list in an effort to facilitate communication during judging.** (We promise not to use this list for anything but the SEFH official business.)

**CHANGING YOUR MIND**: If you change your mind and decide not to judge, please let us know; otherwise we will be looking for you. There is no shame in changing your mind and not judging if something comes up, but please tell us your intentions. We don’t mind last minute cancellations (as long as too many people don’t cancel). So if a last-minute emergency comes up, we’ll understand.

**JUDGING FOR TWO OR MORE ORGANIZATIONS AT THE SAME TIME:** This would be difficult as special award judging is limited from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m., and SEFH (place award) judges are expected to participate all day). I don’t see how you could do this without cheating one or both organizations or the kids. In addition, you’ll be very busy while judging. Please give your undivided attention to one special award organization for one afternoon. Let us know if you have a conflict.

**PREREQUISITES FOR JUDGING:** As a special award organization, STS-AIChE sets its own rules for judge qualifications. If you are (1) a local STS-AIChE member or attendee of our meetings, (2) of good character and (3) care enough to come and help out, you are presumed qualified. If you have a child with a chemical engineering exhibit, you should judge in a different age category to avoid conflict of interest. Please bring a copy of these notes with you to SEFH to show the guards that you are an STS-AIChE judge.

**PARKING:** There will be free parking for the science fair in Lots 20A and 20C. If you get lost and wind up in another lot, most parking costs $3.00 for the day on campus open lots on Saturdays. There is no indication that this event is any different. You will be reimbursed by STS if there is a charge.

**LUNCH**: Food at the fair will probably be inconveniently located, and lines may be long. In addition, it tends to be expensive. If possible, try to eat before you arrive. Our judges will go out for an optional happy hour after judging.

**WEB SITE:** The Science Engineering Fair of Houston maintains a web site. The URL is listed in their literature as <https://sefhouston.org/>. **Please make certain that you are looking at the current year’s SEFH web site. Many old SEFH web sites are still active.**

**LOCATION:** The Science and Engineering Fair of Houston (SEFH) will be at the same location as last year:

University of Houston

3100 Cullen Blvd.

[Athletics/Alumni Center](http://www.uh.edu/maps/buildings/?short_name=ALUM)

Houston, TX 77004

Check on the SEFH web site for a map of the campus and parking.

**ATTACHMENTS / REFERENCES:** You can check the SEFH web site (<https://sefhouston.org/>) for the items of interest that I have noted below. Many of us have judged before, and can show you the ropes on Saturday afternoon, but it doesn’t hurt to review the web site ahead of time. A number of documents can be downloaded ahead of time, so you’ll have a copy on Saturday afternoon. In addition, having copies of a few of these might help getting past checkpoints.

1. Go to the Special Awards web site, <https://sefhouston.org/judges-agencies> and note the following:
2. A letter from the chairman of the SEFH Special Awards Committee (“Introduction,” for information or background).
3. Special awarding agency Head Judge’s checklist. None of this is important to you except for the times of operation. I have or will accomplish the other requirements.
4. A fact sheet for SEFH.
5. Suggested Criteria and Judging Procedures for Special Awarding Agencies. For us, these are only suggestions. Special awarding agencies set their own rules for their own awards.
6. A special awarding agencies scoring sheet for individual projects. We generally use our own informal notes. Clipboards will be available. Just bring a few sheets of blank paper. Again, these are only suggestions for us.
7. “[**Number of Students Exhibiting Per Subject Category**](http://www.uhd.edu/academic/colleges/sciences/naturalscience/SEFH/documents/ajudgesentryreport06031506.xls)” shows the number of exhibits in each official category and the range of categories. However, there can be Chemical Engineering-related projects in almost any category, and for our special award, we decide.
8. Participating schools in the SEFH (for background).
9. A list of special awarding agencies. (This indicates how many judges the kids have to sit through on Saturday afternoon. It takes three to four hours to run through all the special award and place award judges).
10. SEFH financial contributors (also for background). STS-AIChE is usually a patron.
11. List of directors, officers and committee chairs (in case you're interested).
12. A brief historical summary of the Science Engineering Fair of Houston.
13. Rules and Guidelines --- a little familiarity wouldn’t hurt.

Following are my notes on the special awards judging process.

**BEER**: *(I knew that would get your attention.)* In the past we’ve gone out for a following judging. (This year, we’ll be judging on a Saturday afternoon, rather than a Friday evening). Perhaps an alumnus/alumna has suggestions.

**REIMBURSEMENT:** Free parking is officially available, thoughthe South Texas Section will reimburse you for your parking if necessary.

**TIME:** Special awards judging will take place between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 25 at UH. We need to gather in the special awards judging room about 12:30 for registration and information. Expect some confusion finding the special awards judges’ room, so please a little arrive early.

You can’t enter the exhibit area without a badge, which you get at the Special Awards Judges Room, so count on heading up there even if you are late. You may come earlier and walk through the exhibits if you like. You can also enter the exhibits between 12:00 and 12:30, but the kids will not be there. However, this is a good time to walk the floor and get a feeling for the layout of the fair.

Note that there are both team and individual entries in each category. Based on our cost-benefit analysis, we will judge only individual categories.

**SCOPE:** Our purpose in judging is to find the best individual projects related to chemical engineering in each age-group category of the science fair. We will make one award in the Junior Division, one award in the Ninth Grade Division, and two awards in the Senior Division. The science fair has official judging score sheets and criteria for SEFH Place Awards. The score sheet and judging information sheets explain basic judging criteria, and you can review them ahead of time for general understanding. However, special awarding agencies are allowed to design their own criteria, and are methods are simpler and less formal.

**JUDGING METHOD:** The judging process is accomplished by (a) walking through an entire age division and noting which projects seem to be related to Chemical Engineering, and (b) judging them. In the past our winning projects have come from Environmental Science, Chemistry, Earth/Space Sciences, Engineering, Mathematics, and Physics categories. (Chemical Engineering was a new division last year, and as in past years, most chemical engineering projects were placed in other categories.) Once you have decided which projects are related to Chemical Engineering, you choose the best project or projects among them. Depending on the relative quality of the projects, this step may be relatively simple or quite difficult.

You may speak to as many or as few students as you wish. Each student will have prepared an informal speech that describes his project. You might save time by asking a few questions before a student starts his discussion, in order to limit his speaking time. This approach is useful in the early phases of judging when you are trying to decide which projects are related to Chemical Engineering, and which are good enough to use your limited time. However, DO NOT ask the student’s name or school.

Apply the judging criteria (score sheet) in general terms when choosing the best project or projects. Make certain that a Chemical Engineering principle or an economic application of Chemistry is being demonstrated. Reach a consensus among your fellow judges. I think the process of finding a consensus causes you to truly find the best project. It’s possible for one judge to determine the winner, but something truly special happens in the give-and-take necessary to build a consensus.

A final group meeting is held at 3:00 to choose the winner(s) in each age category. Once the decisions are made judges are free to attend the happy hour or attend to personal business. In the past, the happy hours have been interesting enough for judges to hang around for an hour or two.

**DRESS:** Dress comfortably. A long time ago, judges wore business suits to judge the science fair. Most of the students will be wearing blue jeans, and *they* are the ones who are trying to make good impressions. I will probably wear a sports shirt and slacks. **In any case, wear comfortable shoes**. Walking or running shoes are a good choice. You will be walking for two hours, as there will be no place to sit in the exhibit area.

**SUPPLIES:** Bring a few sheets of paper and a couple of pens or pencils. Some clipboards are provided, but it doesn’t hurt for some judges to bring their own.

Again, thank you for your interest in the science fair. I look forward to working with you on Saturday. Feel free to call either of us with any questions or comments. RSVP if you can.

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Document prepared by and revised for this year’s fair on January 16, 2017.