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### **Public opportunities abound at 2011 Science Olympiad National Tournament**

MADISON — The general public will have numerous opportunities to check out a massive showcase of hands-on science when the Science Olympiad National Tournament rolls into campus on May 18-21, 2011.

More than 6,000 students, educators and parents from all 50 states will visit the University of Wisconsin-Madison for the 27<sup>th</sup> annual tournament, one of the nation's most prestigious competitions of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

The event will bring together 120 winning middle school and high school teams that advanced from state-level competitions this spring. Teams compete in more than two-dozen scientific and engineering events on topics ranging from human health, ecology, chemistry, cell biology, geology and engineering. Awards are given for the best overall team score and individual scores in each event.

The winning teams representing Wisconsin are Hamilton Middle School in Madison and Menomonie High School in Menomonie. Hamilton, which won in 2010 in its first year as a Science Olympiad team, successfully defended its state title on April 30.

Two of UW-Madison's newest buildings — the new Union South and the Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery — will be center stage for the tournament.

The public is welcome to attend free of charge; parking in Lot 17 on the Engineering campus will also be free all day on Saturday, May 21. Check out the complete lineup of events at: [http://nso.wisc.edu/master\\_schedule.php](http://nso.wisc.edu/master_schedule.php)

Wisconsin parents, children and science buffs may be especially interested in the following:

- **Science Olympiad Spectator Events.** UW-Madison athletics facilities, including the Field House, McClain Center and Camp Randall Sports Center, will be home on Saturday, May 21, to a full day of spectator events. Teams will compete in challenges such as “Helicopters,” a flight endurance contest powered by rubber-band engines; “Storm the Castle,” a precision catapult exercise; and “Mission Possible,” a Rube Goldberg device using many energy transfer steps to complete a task.

New this year will be “Sumo Bots,” robots engineered to muscle other robot competitors from a ring.

- **FutureLab: The Innovation Expo.** This unique traveling expo on science and technology visits cities across the country, and will be open May 21-23 in the Engineering Centers Building. FutureLab is a celebration of innovation today and of what may come in the future.

Visitors can control walking, talking robots that sense motion, sound and touch; test hydrogen fuel cell cars, solar power panels and hydrowind technology; experience augmented reality; see a 3D hologram and real sci-fi props from movies like Star Wars and Alien; play X-Box Kinect and challenge Body and Brain Connection; play space station simulation games; and make your own animation and share it with the world.

- **Your Wisconsin Showcase.** From 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Friday, May 20, the Wisconsin Institutes of Discovery will come alive with a tribute to Wisconsin science, innovation and education. Visitors can learn about more than 130 different UW academic majors and explore opportunities to conduct research, volunteer, participate in student organizations, study abroad, and more.

Visitors can also chat with Science Olympiad corporate sponsors and industry recruiters about what you can do with a UW-Madison degree in science and technology; and participate in science “Exploration Stations,” with the chance to perform experiments and solve questions related to everything from DNA and stem cells to robots.

- **The US Air Force OCC Chopper.** At New Union South on Friday, May 20, see this eye-catching, one-of-a-kind motorcycle built by famed Orange County Chopper (OCC) motorcycle customizers working with the United States Air Force that demonstrates what a solid foundation in mechanics can help someone accomplish. The vast majority

of Air Force personnel work in mechanical, technical, engineering and electronic careers.

- **The NSO Opening Ceremony.** In addition to performances by the UW Marching Band and the Parade of States, May 20 will represent a UW-Madison “first.” The 6-7:30 p.m. opening ceremony at the Kohl Center features the first dual performance of UW-Madison’s famous showmen of science — chemistry Professor Bassam Shakhshiri and physics Professor Clint Sprott. Their programs, “Science is Fun” and “Wonders of Physics,” respectively, have delighted tens of thousands of spectators over the past three decades.

UW-Madison landed the 2011 competition thanks in large part to UW-Madison College of Engineering Dean Paul S. Percy, a strong supporter of NSO. In 2005, Percy developed an outreach program through which engineering undergraduates serve as mentors to help area schools form teams. More than two-dozen NSO teams have been established through the effort, bringing the Wisconsin team total to more than 100.

Southern Wisconsin schools starting Science Olympiad teams recently include: Mount Horeb Middle and High Schools; Waunakee Middle School; Edgewood Middle and High Schools; Oregon Middle School; Palmyra-Eagle Middle School; Badger Ridge Middle School in Verona; and Marshall Middle and High Schools.

Members of the public also can participate as volunteers. NSO organizers anticipate needing more than 400 volunteers over the four-day period, covering the Dane County Regional Airport, registration at new Union South, off-campus tours, banquets and the competition itself. To learn more about how to volunteer, visit the NSO website at:

<http://nso.wisc.edu>.

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*Science Olympiad is a Chicago-area based, national non-profit organization founded in 1984 dedicated to improving the quality of K-12 STEM education, increasing male, female and minority interest in science, creating a technologically literate workforce and providing recognition for outstanding achievement by both students and teachers. More than 180,000 students on 6,000 teams from all 50 states competed in 320 regional, state and national Science Olympiad tournaments last year.*