

Science Olympiad Executive Board Bios

Board Officers



Dr. Jon Pedersen
Board Chair (2022-2024)

Currently **Dr. Jon Pedersen** is the Dean of the Oklahoma State University College of Education and Human Sciences and a professor in Teaching, Learning and Educational Sciences. Prior to this position he served as Dean of the College of Education at the University of South Carolina. Dean Pedersen provides leadership and sustained growth in scholarship, teaching, outreach and the development of innovative programs to support faculty, staff and students in the college. He is motivated by seeking opportunities to stimulate those who are inspired by a passion to serve children, youth, families, schools and communities and has developed and provided leadership for innovative programs for faculty, staff, and students in PK-16 education settings. He maintains a focus on communication, participation, and developing collaborations and coalitions in order to achieve college goals including the development of faculty skills; building participation and involvement in the leadership process; and supporting the empowerment of individuals. Dr. Pedersen is currently active in multiple national/international organizations, and has held many leadership roles including president of the Association for Science Teacher Education (ASTE). Over the course of his professional career he has well over 100 publications including 16 books.



Dr. Peter Hung
Board Vice Chair (2023-2025)
Board Secretary (2020-2024)

Dr. Peter Hung is a Project Leader in Science and Technology Strategy and Development at The Aerospace Corporation, a Federally Funded Research and Development Center. He received his B.S. in Physics and M.S. and Ph.D. in Applied Physics from the California Institute of Technology (Caltech). As a Science Olympiad alum, Peter started Caltech's involvement with Science Olympiad and later founded the Caltech Science Olympiad Club to provide opportunities for Science Olympiad alumni to give back to Science Olympiad. He currently serves as the Southern California Science Olympiad State Director and the Bay Area Science Olympiad Regional Director. He received the Science Olympiad Heart of Gold Award in 2009 and served on the National Science Olympiad Advisory Committee from 2017 to 2019. He currently also serves on the board of several other nonprofits to promote and improve undergraduate research at Caltech and in Southern California.



Renae Cubbin
Board Treasurer (2020-2024)

Renae Cubbin is Vice President, Tax for GE Healthcare in Chicago. The company's purpose centers on digitizing healthcare, driving productivity to improve the lives of patients, and creating meaningful efficiencies for providers, health systems, and researchers around the world. Prior to joining GE, she worked at CNH Industrial and General Motors Company. During her 20 years at GM, she held various positions in GM's Tax Staff, including overseas assignments in Germany and Brazil. Renae started her career in KPMG's Detroit office, focusing on financial institutions and insurance companies. Renae holds a B.B.A. degree from the University of Michigan Ross School of Business in Ann Arbor, Michigan and M.S. Tax and J.D. degrees from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. Renae is a member of the State Bar of Michigan and the Michigan Association of Certified Public Accountants. Renae has served as Treasurer on the Board of the CNH Industrial Foundation and the Finance Committee of the Community Consolidated School District 181 in Clarendon Hills, Illinois.

Science Olympiad Executive Board Bios

Board Members



Jenny Kopach
Ex-Officio Board Member

As Science Olympiad CEO and Senior Vice President of Marketing Communications, **Jenny Kopach** oversees the operations of Science Olympiad and manages sponsor program implementation with Fortune 500 businesses, government agencies, scientific associations and institutions of higher education. Working closely with a national volunteer network of Rules Committees, State Directors, National Event Supervisors and Advisory Committee Members, she also runs the Science Olympiad Urban Schools Initiative and has expanded the Elementary Science Olympiad. Jenny is a member of the Science Olympiad Executive Board, the Illinois Governor's P-20 Council College and Career Readiness Committee, the MxD Workforce Development Committee, the NBC Chicago Community Action Board, the Economic Club of Chicago, The Executives' Club of Chicago and serves as Precinct Committeewoman for York Township and Illinois State Chair for Million Women Mentors. She also facilitates relationships with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and the Japan Science and Technology Agency. Jenny has a B.A. from the College of Literature, Science & the Arts from the University of Michigan.



Soha D. Shah
Board Member

Soha D. Shah is the Vice President of Operations at Jayna, Inc., a precision manufacturing and assembly company in Troy, Ohio. For the past 24 years, she has been responsible for operations, human resources, customer service, marketing and business development. Soha received her B.A. degree in Education from the University of Michigan and her MBA from the University of Dayton. Service in the local and larger community has always been a part of Soha's personal mission. In her hometown of Piqua, Ohio, she is Regional Director for the annual Piqua Regional Science Olympiad Tournament, Vice President of the Piqua Education Foundation Board of Directors, an active member of the Indian Community Organization of Miami-Shelby Counties and an executive committee member of the Jain Center of Cincinnati – Dayton. Soha also works with various family members in running The Shah Family Foundation. A Science Olympiad alum, Soha is now involved with State and National Science Olympiad events and served on the planning committee for the 2013 and 2017 National Tournaments at Wright State University. When Soha is not working or fulfilling her commitments, she is an avid world traveler.



Alexander Chao
Board Member

Alexander Chao is a Board-Certified Medical Physicist and works in Radiation Oncology departments treating cancer patients with targeted radiation. His day-to-day involves linear accelerator calibration, patient-specific quality assurance, and treatment planning. Alexander has a B.S. in Nuclear and Radiological Engineering and a M.S. in Medical Physics from the Georgia Institute of Technology. For the last two decades, Alexander has been actively engaged with Science Olympiad, serving most recently as Southern California State Regional Director from 2019-2021. His passion for Science Olympiad stems from his desire to see youth excited about learning and to see students grow in utilizing problem-solving skills for practical applications. Science Olympiad was instrumental in shaping his own path in engineering, and his service aims to provide that same opportunity to the next generation. He currently resides in Los Angeles, California.

Science Olympiad Executive Board Bios

Board Members (continued)



Deb Mendenhall
Board Member
Associate Treasurer

Deb Mendenhall is the Vice President of Finance at Science Olympiad. She has overseen the budget and all fiscal aspects of Science Olympiad, Inc. since starting in 2011. Prior to Science Olympiad Deb worked for KPMG in Chicago as a tax manager servicing a variety of clients including those in the real estate sector. Deb has a B.S. in Accounting from the Wilbur O. and Ann Powers Schools of Business at Clemson University and a M.S. in Taxation from the DePaul Driehaus College of Business. Deb serves on multiple community boards focusing on providing youth with educational opportunities. When not running everything at Science Olympiad, Deb is a champion tennis player and certified pickleball instructor.

Emeritus Board Members



Dr. Gerard Putz
Founding Board Member and
Officer (1984-2019)
In Memoriam

Dr. Gerard Putz was President and Co-Founder of Science Olympiad. He served as the Macomb County Science Center Director and Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Programs at the Macomb Intermediate School District (MISD) in Michigan for more than 30 years. He began his career teaching high school Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science and Special Ability Science Program for the Detroit Public Schools. Dr. Putz lectured at dozens of universities and made more than 100 presentations at science education and gifted and talented conferences across the US and in Japan. Dr. Putz held several advanced degrees, including a bachelor's degree in Science from the University of Detroit, a Masters in Guidance and Counseling from Wayne State University, a Master's in Arts and Liberal Sciences from Wesleyan University, and a Doctorate in Secondary Education from Wayne State University. Dr. Putz also attained the rank of Lt. Colonel in the US Army Air Defense Artillery. He served on the boards of many non-profits, associations and community groups and was chosen as the National Outstanding Science Supervisor by the United States National Science Supervisors Association.



Sharon Putz
Founding Board Member and
Officer (1984 to 2023)

Sharon Putz is one of the co-founders of the Science Olympiad national organization, and currently serves as Senior Advisor to the national office, overseeing many operations of the non-profit and serves as Vice Chair of the Science Olympiad USA Foundation. Sharon's skills include program administration, special events management and state chapter oversight. She maintains relationships with key personnel and volunteers and serves as historian of the Science Olympiad organization. Sharon has presented at numerous workshops since the 1970s on elementary science and outdoor education as well as Science Olympiad. Sharon is a lifetime member of the National Science Teachers Association.