



# COTSA State Conference Survival Guide

*Getting You Safely and  
Successfully Through the  
Colorado TSA  
State Conference*

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**COLORADO TECHNOLOGY STUDENT ASSOCIATION**  
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## **COTSA Conference Survival Guide**

Welcome to the Colorado Technology Student Association! This Conference Survival Guide is designed to help you get the most out of the COTSA State Conference and still have your sanity when it's all said and done.

The guide is set up to walk you through the conference, day by day...giving you an idea of what to expect, when to expect it and what it means.

Along the way, we'll give you tips and tricks that will help you manage your chapter at a state conference. Included here are things we've picked up over the years – tips and tricks we've borrowed from older, more wizened souls. We all know what it's like to have been a “noob” at one time or another...we've been there, done that, and gotten the t-shirt – several of them in fact. Hopefully the knowledge contained in this guide will help you avoid some of the pitfalls the veteran TSA advisors have come across.

### **IN THE BEGINNING...**

The first thing is to remember to BREATHE!!! There's practically no problem that can't be overcome! Please know that the Colorado TSA Staff is here to help and support you and your students. No matter what you need, start in the Spruce Room. Any of the conference staff will be more than happy to help you! (P.S. We like chocolate!)

### **LET'S ASSUME...**

Yeah, yeah, we know... We know what assuming makes...but if you're reading this document, we will assume that you have done the following:

- 1) Affiliated your chapter with TSA Nationals (if you haven't, stop here, go immediately to <http://www.tsaweb.org/Affiliation-and-Dues> and take care of that. You can't participate in the state conference unless you've affiliated your chapter.)
- 2) You have received a copy of the National Competitive Events Guide. (If you haven't, email the state advisor, Mr. Tony Raymond at [tony.raymond@cccs.edu](mailto:tony.raymond@cccs.edu) and he will send it to you. Also, please make sure you visit the rules updates and clarification page (<http://www.tsaweb.org/Updates-and-Clarification>) so you are aware of any rule changes, clarifications, etc.
- 3) You have received a copy of the Call to Conference. Again, if you haven't gotten this, you can get a copy at the Colorado TSA website ([www.ctsoadvisor.com/cotsa](http://www.ctsoadvisor.com/cotsa)) or you can email Mr. Raymond for one.

4) You are aware of the deadlines for affiliation, registration, etc. (These deadlines are listed in a nice table inside the Call to Conference. Please make sure you are aware of all deadlines and that you meet them! Failure to do so could result in your team not participating in the conference and we don't want that!

5) You have registered your team for the state conference. If you haven't, please go to: <https://www.registermychapter.com/tsa/co/Main.asp> and register! Make sure you do it by the deadline, or your team may not be able to participate.

6) You've already made your hotel reservations at the conference hotel. If you haven't, check the Call to Conference for information on the hotel. Call and set up your rooms as soon as possible.

7) You have arranged for transportation to and from the conference. If you haven't, you need to do that ASAP. The guys in the bus barn need more than a couple of days' notice to schedule a bus and parents would prefer a bit of advance notice if they have to pick up/drop off their sons and daughters to the conference.

8) You've worked through the hours of getting students ready to come to the state conference and navigated the bureaucracy. It's now time to finally see the fruits of your labors.

With those assumptions made, let's also assume that you are now ready for the COTSA State Leadership Exposition (otherwise known as the state conference)!

## **STATE CONFERENCE** **DAY ONE – ARRIVAL DAY**

This is probably one of the most stressful days of the conference. Packing up everything you need – projects, computers, luggage, food, students – in and of itself is a chore to be sure, but planning ahead on your part will save you tons of time.

Make sure that all of your students have all of the materials they need – including tools, raw materials, computers and power strips (can't forget the power strips and maybe an extension cord or two!) – to effectively compete in their various events. There have been many advisors who have made an emergency run back to the school or to the local hardware store to get a forgotten item.

This year's conference registration and event check-in will begin at 1:00 p.m. and will run until 7:00 p.m. Be prepared...if you arrive close to the 1:00 p.m. time frame, your hotel rooms may not yet be ready (normal check in time for a hotel is 3:00 p.m.), so you could end up sitting around waiting for a bit. On the upside, though, you can check into the conference, get the students their name badges and they can get their projects checked in.

Depending on when you arrive at the conference hotel, here's what you should expect and do:

- **Check in to the hotel.** The hotel should have all room keys ready for you by 3:00 p.m. We have worked with the hotel and arranged it so you won't be waiting in line a long time at the front desk while they prepare all your keys. As a reminder -- you are responsible for the payment directly to the hotel for your rooms, including all incidentals (like pay-per-view movies). The hotel does charge for phone calls from the room as well. We have told the hotel to turn these features off for us, but it's a good idea to double-check that they are indeed off for all of your rooms. You don't want any surprise charges when you check out. It's usually smart to "turn off" all features including phones for every room except yours or a chaperone's. (Be aware that students have been known to make a few prank phone calls in the middle of the night if the phones are left on!) Most students do have or have access to personal cell phones they can use in an emergency.
- **Check in to the conference.** You can do this either before or after you check in to the hotel. Conference registration will open at 1:00 p.m. Keep in mind that students cannot check in their projects until AFTER you have checked in for the conference – they need name badges to do so.

As the advisor, YOU need to come to the SPRUCE ROOM to pick up your registration packet. ***Only the advisor can pick up the registration packet.*** Do not send a student to get it for you. Our staff will not release it to anyone but the registered advisor for your chapter. The Spruce Room is located on the main floor of the hotel just to the right of the hotel's front desk. The state staff there will be more than happy to help you, so please feel free to stop by if you have questions! There should be someone in the Spruce Room throughout the conference (and we literally mean THROUGHOUT the conference, including well into the night) to lend assistance.

At the Spruce Room, you will be given a bag containing:

- **Your name badges** – These are essential. Everyone in your chapter MUST have their name badge on at all times when attending conference functions. Persons not wearing their badges will not be admitted to the various functions.

- **Lanyards** – Each registered conference participant will receive the OFFICIAL Colorado TSA Lanyard for their name badges.
- **Conference Programs** – The conference program contains all the vital information about where and when the various events will occur. It contains a grid showing locations and times for onsite events as well as a complete listing of ALL events. It also has several reminders about project check-in, food, etc. Remind your students to hang on to their copies of the schedule. We have a limited number and cannot replace them because someone left one in their room. A copy of the conference program will be posted outside the Spruce Room if you or your students need to reference it.
- **Conference Schedules** – In your packet, you will find a copy of each student's schedule of events, as well as an overall schedule for your chapter. The individual schedules show your students what events they are signed up for and where and when they need to be.
- **Special Interest Session Flyer** – You'll find a copy of the Special Interest Sessions that we are offering throughout the conference. These special interest sessions cover a range of topics. They are only 45-50 minutes in length, so if your students have some down time, we highly recommend that you send them to participate in these sessions.
- **Special Interest Session Punch Cards** – There should be one of these for each of your students. After attending a special interest session, they are to get these cards punched. If they attend four or more sessions, and receive four or more punches to their card, they can place the card with their name and ID number on the back into a bin located in the Spruce Room for a drawing for a special prize to be awarded later in the conference. (The prizes are pretty cool, so please encourage your students to make sure they get their cards punched!)
- **Goodies!** – There may be all sorts of goodies in the bag that were donated by vendors and supporters of TSA. Like Forrest Gump said, "You never know what you're gonna get."

## NAME BADGES

These are VERY important. On the name badges will be each participant's name, their individual ID number and their team number. Some events require the individual ID and some require a team ID. When checking in for events, students will need their ID/Team ID numbers. ***Do not lose the badges! Remind the students that they should never leave their rooms without them!***

## PROJECT CHECK-IN

Once you've gotten the registration materials from conference headquarters, and distributed the name badges, your students can check in their projects (only those that need to be checked in) starting at 1:00 p.m.

During the first part of February, you should have received from the state office a packet containing project-check-in labels. Please affix these to **every** component of their project (notebook, display pieces, display board, etc.) Make sure the ID label does not interfere with the design or appeal of the project (when necessary, put the label on the back or bottom of the piece. You should affix these labels at school BEFORE you come to the conference. We will not have labeling capability on site.

Before the student checks in their project, have them confirm that all the pieces have the proper ID number on them. Once you have ensured that all the project components are properly labeled, they can bring them to the EVERGREEN D ballroom. There, the State Officers and Alumni will help check projects in. Students will be escorted into the display area to set up their display or to place their entry in the correct event bin.

## BEFORE THE OPENING SESSION

Once you've gotten everything all checked in, you've got some time to relax and explore the hotel – or, more importantly, **get something to eat**. Remember – you are on your own for dinner on the first night of the conference. There is a Garcia's Mexican restaurant along with a Wendy's across the street from the hotel and there are other fast-food places within walking distance. Make sure, though, that you are back in time for the opening session! The opening session will be in the Rocky Mountain Events Center (RMEC) and will start promptly at 7:30 p.m. Plan on being in your seats no later than 7:15 p.m. Chapters should sit together.

## THE OPENING SESSION

Come on in! Sit down! Take a load off! It's time to start enjoying the conference! **Dress for the opening session and the social time on Friday night is casual. These are the only times t-shirts, jeans, shorts and athletic shoes will be allowed during conference events. However, no hats will be allowed at any time during the conference!**

During the opening session, several things will happen:

- **Opening Ceremonies** – The state officers will open the conference with the official opening ceremony.
- **Announcements** – There will be a few announcements, including conference expectations and any last-minute updates you'll need to be aware of.
- **Roll Call** – There will be a roll call by the TSA State Secretary of chapters present – high schools will be called first, then middle schools, in alphabetical order. The secretary will call the name of the school and announce the number of voting delegates each chapter has present at the conference (a voting delegate is any student who is a registered conference participant, so all of your students present are voting delegates.) Advisors, chaperones, guests and elementary students are not voting delegates and do not get a vote. Make sure that you have appointed a representative from your school (usually your chapter president) and told them how many students (voting delegates) you have at the conference. *If a student registered for the conference but did not attend, please correct the count given by the secretary (described below).*
- When the roll is called, the TSA State Secretary will say the name of the school and announce the number of voting delegates your school has on record. When your school is called, your representative should stand and confirm the number of voting delegates your chapter has. For example, the secretary will say, "ABC School, 15 voting delegates." To which the representative will say, "ABC School stands at 15 voting delegates." If the delegate count given by the secretary is incorrect for any reason, the chapter representative should give the correct number of voting delegates. The secretary will then confirm the count and go on to the next school. This ensures an accurate count of votes in an election.

- **State Officer Candidate Speeches** – Each of the candidates for State Officer will be invited up on stage to give a short, two-minute speech to the entire delegation. Students should pay attention to these speeches as they will get the opportunity to vote for their favorite candidates later on.

### MEANWHILE...BACK AT THE RANCH...

While the opening session is running, judges have already started to evaluate student projects; we will have some people coming from business and industry to will start judging around 7:00 p.m.

We also try to assign an advisor to every event (which we explain in more detail in the judging section below), so you may be judging an event on Thursday night AFTER the opening session and AFTER you take care of your students.

As for judging – that’s a whole different animal that we’ll deal with later. For now, though, let’s just focus on what happens at the conference.

### AFTER THE OPENING SESSION...

- **State Officer Candidate Meet and Greet** - Immediately following the opening session, the State Officer Candidates will be available in the atrium area for a “meet and greet.” Your students are encouraged to “meet and greet” the candidates so they can make an informed decision on who to vote for to be on next year’s state officer team. Then, sometime before 10 a.m. on Friday, you need to gather together all of your students and decide how you, as a team, are going to vote. Remember – advisors *do not* get a vote. Tally your votes on the ballots (discussed in the next section), and return them to the Spruce Room NO LATER than 10 a.m. on Friday.
- **State Advisor Forum/Ballot Distribution** – At the conclusion of the opening session, you as the chapter advisor should come to the LUPINE ROOM to attend the State Advisor Forum. This is a chance to meet with the state advisor to ask questions, raise concerns, etc. This is a good time to do so...for the rest of the conference, the state advisor will be running frantically about making sure everything is running smoothly. During the forum, you will also need to pick up your ballot envelope. The envelope should contain a single ballot.

On the ballot, you will need to tally the votes for the various candidates. The total number of votes for any office or candidate cannot exceed the total number of voting delegates your chapter was confirmed as having during the roll call at the opening session.

For example, if a school has 23 voting delegates (advisors do not count and do not get a vote), you can cast them any way you choose. You can choose to say all 23 votes are for Candidate A for President, or you can say 15 are for Candidate A for President, 7 are for Candidate B and 1 is for Candidate C. Tally the votes by each candidate’s name. ***Again, the total number of votes for a single office or candidate cannot exceed the total number verified by the state secretary during the roll call.***

Repeat this procedure for all state offices. There are no write-in candidates.

Once your chapter has voted, please return the ballot in the envelope to the SPRUCE ROOM. Ballots should be returned no later than 10 a.m. Friday morning.

## **WRITTEN TESTING**

Following the opening session, while you are in the State Advisor Forum, some of your students will be busy with written testing. There are only a handful of event events that require a written test: Chapter Team – High School, Chapter Team, Middle School, Electrical Applications – Middle School, Technical Sketching & Application – High School, Tech Bowl – High School and Tech Bowl – Middle School.

Students in any of these events must take the written test at the time stated in the conference program. If the written test is a team test (like Tech Bowl or Chapter Team), the entire team must take the test at the same time (this is to prevent the possibility of impropriety in test-taking).

## **CURFEW – BEFORE AND AFTER**

Yes, we have a curfew. The official hotel curfew is at 11:30 p.m. for students on Friday night, and midnight on Saturday night. As a chapter advisor, you are well within your rights to specify an earlier curfew (most seasoned advisors do). They do that for several reasons: A) the students do need to rest and the first competitions in the morning can start as early as 7 a.m.; and B) In some cases, advisors who are judging events could be up well into the night judging events/displays for the following day. We'll talk more about this later.

Once your students have gotten all of their written testing out of the way and have had a chance to chat with state officer candidates, you are free to work with your chapter until curfew. You should discuss how your team wants to vote for the state officers as well as discuss and your plans for the coming day. Go over the schedules with your students so they know where and when to be the next day. Let them know where YOU will be, too, just in case they need you.

At curfew, make sure you do a bed check on each room to make sure the students are A) in the right rooms, and B) everyone's accounted for and not wandering off somewhere in the hotel. One trick that advisors have used to ensure that curfew is not broken after bed check is to put a small piece of masking tape across the door and jamb after you complete that room's bed check. If the door to the room is opened, the tape will break or come unsealed and cannot be reset by the students once they have returned to the safety of their rooms. Stress to them that if such a situation occurs (violation of curfew), dire consequences await them. We do have dedicated alumni who enjoy prowling the halls of the hotel at night looking for students violating curfew. The consequences are up to you...it's your duty as an advisor to supervise your students and enforce the rules as necessary.

WHEW!!! And that's just the first day! But take deep breath....everything's going just fine!!!



## **DAY TWO – LET THE GAMES COMMENCE!**

Today is the day when things really get going. Things will seem like a blur and it'll go faster than you think. This is where you need to rely on your students to step up and be where they need to be when they need to be there. As an advisor, it's your job to make sure your students are awake and on their way this morning...judges don't take kindly to no-shows! Make sure students plan to arrive at any event at least 5 minutes before the start time (in the case of on-site events) or their presentation or demonstration time.

### **CONFLICTS**

This is something we work to avoid, but sometimes it just isn't possible. If a student has a conflict between events (they may have overlapping times), they will need to go to the judges for each of the contests in conflict and explain to them the issue. The judges are aware that not every conflict can be eliminated by pre-planning and are more than willing to work with a student – BUT the student must work out conflicts BEFORE the competition – not in the middle or after! Students are urged to PLAN AHEAD!!!

For team events, like Problem-Solving or Structural Engineering/Structural Model, usually one member of the team can leave briefly for another event (to do an interview, for example), and then return to complete the first event. However, in such a case, one member of the team must stay in the team event and continue working; otherwise, the judges will assume they have left and will either grade the entry on the work completed or disqualify it in its entirety.

### **FINALIST POSTINGS**

While the students had the luxury of being in bed by at 11:30 p.m. the previous night, judges were hard at work evaluating displays, plans, notebooks, and portfolios. The reason they do this is because several contests have finalist rounds in which only the best entries proceed.

Using the rubrics that were in the competitive event guides, the judges determine the top entries in each event (usually between 5 and 12 entries). Once the top entries have been determined, the judges turn in those results to the Conference Headquarters, and finalist lists are prepared and posted on a bulletin board outside the Spruce Room. Finalists are identified only by their individual contestant number or team number – never by name or school name – so your students will need to know their individual and/or team number (HINT: They are on their individual name badges!).

Once finalists are posted, they are usually required to sign up for a time to present, demonstrate, or compete. If your student is a finalist, have them sign up for a competition time that best fits their individual schedule. In some cases, like Tech Bowl, all finalists will need to report at a given time to the designated competition room. Have your students check the finalist posting board outside Conference Headquarters periodically throughout the day as the finalist lists are posted as soon as scores are reported from the judges and verified by our judging coordinator.

## CONTESTS

Contests on Friday start as early as 7:00 a.m. and run throughout the day. As an advisor, please make sure that your students have all the supplies and equipment they need to compete in an event. Otherwise, you may be running all over at the last minute looking for supplies. Keep in mind that with so many events happening at once, you probably will not see your students for most of the day. It's a wise idea to give them a cell number where you could be reached in case of an emergency. Let them know if you are judging an event and where you will be in case they need you.

## MEALS

Breakfast and dinner are on your own today (Friday). However, lunch will be provided. Each registered participant with your chapter should have received a lunch ticket in your registration packet. If you have a student with a special dietary restriction, they will have a special card valid for a meal that meets their restriction. We will only have special meals prepared for those who have requested them IN ADVANCE – so make sure that when you register your students for the state conference, you indicate any special dietary needs. We will do our best to accommodate any student, but we are limited by the information provided to us.

What some advisors do is bring with them non-perishable foods – boxed juices, pop-tarts, doughnuts, snack foods, etc., and store them in a common room. Coolers also work. You probably will not have your entire team together at any one point throughout the day, so usually students are on their own for meals (which is why the lunch ticket is perfect – they can get their lunch on the go when their competition schedules permit it).

There is a restaurant in the hotel (which can require a significant amount of time, particularly during peak rush times, and can also be quite expensive), there is a coffee shop (which can easily back up with the amount of students we will have at the conference, and there are restaurants within walking distance. It's up to you how to handle students leaving the hotel, but generally allowing students (particularly middle school students) to walk anywhere off hotel property without an adult is a bad idea. Again, this is where a cell phone number for your students comes in real handy.

Keep in mind, too, that you may not always be available to your students – especially if you are assigned an event to help judge (and most advisors are).

All competitions are scheduled to cease at 7:00 p.m. At 7:00 p.m. the social time of our conference gets underway.

## SOCIAL TIME

Keep in mind that as part of any Career and Technical Student Organization's (CTSOs) Plan of Work, social activities are key – interacting, networking and playing (yes, playing) with other students from other schools is an invaluable part of the team-building/learning experience. To that end, we have several events planned for the evening. During this time, students can interact in a less formal, non-competitive environment. But that's not to say that there isn't *some* form of friendly competition...this year, we will be having the Tech Bowl oral rounds during the social hour so students can join in the excitement. We'll also have our annual Giant Jenga tournament. And, as mentioned before, while the hotel curfew is midnight, please feel free to set an earlier curfew for your team.

**Dress for the social time is casual – jeans, athletic shoes and t-shirts may be worn during this time; no hats are allowed.**

**The exception to this will be those students who are competing in the Tech Bowl competition. Students in the Tech Bowl oral rounds must dress in attire as stated in the competitive event guide.**

### **Activities**

We have a variety of activities to keep your students busy until curfew:

- **Dance** – We provide a DJ and the banquet area is turned into a dance where students can choose to dance the night away (at least until midnight – that’s when curfew is!)
- **Giant Jenga Tournament** – This event started in fun, but has taken on some serious overtones! Teams vie to determine who is a Jenga master by using giant Jenga blocks! In order to compete in the tournament, teams needed to have signed up ahead of time during conference registration. However, after the tournament is over, the blocks will be available for use until curfew.
- **Movie** – Every year, we show a movie in one of the hotel’s meeting rooms near the Atrium. The movie is usually something fun and light, suitable for our crowd.
- **Game Room** – We also set aside a game room where students can bring appropriate board or card games to play with others.
- **The Pool** – The pool in the hotel will also be open until curfew.

### **CURFEW**

Again, a reminder: It is your job as an advisor to see that your students observe curfew (midnight at the latest) and are respectful of the other guests in the hotel. Keep in mind that while TSA occupies the bulk of the hotel, there are other guests who will be using the facility. We need to be mindful of them throughout the conference. To reiterate, please feel free to set an earlier curfew for your students if you wish.

### **REST!!!!**

At midnight, it’s time to get some rest. The bulk of the events are over and now it’s time to hit the rack. Overnight, the score keepers will tally the scores in preparation for the awards ceremony tomorrow!

## **DAY THREE – AWARDS DAY**

It's time to rise and shine! Today there's still a lot to do, even though there isn't much on the conference schedule.

### **PACKING UP**

Right off the bat, you'll need to make sure your students get EVERYTHING packed up and ready to go. Often, advisors will arrange for one room to be a late-checkout and will use it to store all their gear until after the conference. Others will have transportation standing by and will store their gear and luggage there.

Due to the size of the conference, luggage and projects/tools/materials CANNOT be stored in the lobby, atrium, or in the events center where awards will be held. We have too many conference attendees and we cannot block areas that other hotel guests will need to use.

The hotel will provide extra garbage bags for trash. Please use them. Have your students use them! Do not leave the rooms in a completely disheveled state. Remind the students that they are guests in someone else's home and they are to treat it like such.

### **FOOD!**

Make sure your team gets something to eat! The awards ceremony is scheduled to start around 12:00 p.m. (depending on the time the last few events finish) and will run for approximately two-and-a-half hours. We try to get through the awards as fast as possible, but it can seem like an eternity if you don't eat beforehand!

### **ELEMENTARY BUDDIES ARRIVE!**

On Saturday morning is when the elementary students should arrive with their parents to participate in the Fore!, Crash Test, and Creativity Challenges. If you have elementary students participating, you will have received their nametags and lanyards in your registration packets. Please be sure to arrange to meet your Elementary Buddies and give them their name tags. Parents of elementary buddies are welcome to stay through the Awards Ceremony, but must check in at the conference headquarters to get special credentials in order to get into the ceremony.

### **COMPETITIONS**

The competitions start as early as 7:00 a.m. on Saturday morning. Again, it can be difficult juggling getting packed, checking out of rooms AND the competitions – so rely on your team to help their teammates who may be competing early.

All competitions stop around 11:00. Scores are turned in and are tallied as soon as possible.

## PROJECT DISPLAYS

On Saturday morning we open the project display room the projects/displays can be viewed. We enforce a “no touch” policy – some of these projects may be going on to compete in the national conference and therefore need to be protected as much as possible. Feel free to take as many pictures as you like – **just don’t touch!** Please stress the importance of not touching to your students!

Projects/displays may be picked up between noon and the awards ceremony as long as the project can be stored easily. Large projects should be picked up immediately following the awards ceremony. In order to claim a project, a student must have his/her ID and it must match the number on the project or they will not be allowed to pick up the project.

Any and all projects left after the conference will be discarded.

## AWARDS CEREMONY

- **Seating** – Due to the size of our conference, we can only accommodate seating for REGISTERED AND BADGED conference attendees. Seating in the Rocky Mountain Events Center **will be assigned** to registered conference participants ONLY. **No seating may be saved.** Overflow seating will be in the hotel’s atrium area. Due to fire codes, we are unable to accommodate standing-only crowds. While we enjoy having our parents come and celebrate with their students at the conference, Colorado TSA has grown so big that we have almost outgrown our conference facilities just with our conference attendees alone. In order to make this a pleasant experience for all of them, we cannot allow parents, family members and friends to attend the Awards Ceremony. Please explain that this is a professional conference just like any other professional conference and only those individuals who are registered and badged can access the conference.
- **Awards** – We have a great many awards to present at our awards ceremony.
  - **Advisor of the Year:** This is a special time for the students – it’s where they get to shine in front of their peers. But...it is also the chance for advisors to shine, too. Every year, one advisor is recognized as the Advisor of the Year. This award is bestowed on an advisor who has demonstrated outstanding character and leadership as a TSA Chapter Advisor.
  - **Competitive Event Awards:** The awards for the students are presented in alphabetical order and are announced from third place to first place. Students earning a first, second or third place medal are asked to come up and receive their medal as presented by the state officer team. If you have student who earns an award and cannot be present at the awards ceremony, we can arrange to get them their medal at a later time, or you can send a representative from your team up to claim their medal for them. Following the presentation of awards, the 2015-2016 State Officer Team will be installed.
  - ***No chapters should leave the ballroom until the ceremony is over and the new president has adjourned the conference.***

- **Photography** – We wholeheartedly encourage photography of the awards! Please feel free to take as many photos of your students as you wish – but please....share them with us! We like to post photos of students on our webpage and our Facebook page! As of this writing, we are working to arrange to have a professional photographer on hand to take professional photos of the students as they win their awards. Please watch the COTSA website for more information.
- **Project Pick-up** – Once the awards ceremony is concluded students may go to the Evergreen Ballroom and pick up their projects. Remember – they must have their conference badge with proper ID numbers on them to claim their projects. Any projects not claimed will be discarded.
- **Departing the Hotel:** Since we will not provide seating in the atrium or lobby for parents and family, you will need to make arrangements with those families picking up their students to wait outside the hotel. They cannot wait in fire lanes or traffic lanes – they will have to park in the hotel parking lot. You should tell them to be at the hotel around 2:00-2:30 p.m. to pick up their students.

#### **AND THAT ABOUT WRAPS IT UP...**

Whew! The conference is over and you've survived. It may look like a lot, but it goes pretty quickly and smoothly once you get the hang of it.

If at any time you need any help, have a question, just want to talk to an adult, or to get a fix of chocolate, please feel free to come to the Spruce Room! The TSA Conference staff is dedicated to putting on a positive, fun-filled conference for everyone – and that includes you! Please let us know what we can do to make your TSA experience more enjoyable!

## **JUDGING**

We told you that we'd talk about this later.

All of the events at TSA are judged for a score with the exception of the Creativity Challenges for Middle and High School. The Creativity Challenges really are designed to engage the elementary students with their middle and high school buddies and get them excited about taking part in a big event like the state conference. The Fore! and Crash Test events are judged for scores and are eligible for medals at the awards ceremony. (Yes, even the elementary buddies get to come up and get a medal if they win!)

### **Q: Do I have to judge?**

**A:** Yes...and no. All chapter advisors are assigned some form of judging duty. Sometimes, an advisor will bring along a parent, chaperone, or other school official who will assume the judging duties for that chapter while the advisor manages the chapter...and that's OK. As long as all chapters have someone involved with the judging process, we're good. We endeavor to recruit business and industry volunteers, parents, chaperones, and alumni to help judge the events, and usually an event will have two or more judges. However, with some events, all that's needed is one judge – and that may just be the chapter advisor assigned to the event. Usually, to avoid “conflict of interest” cases, we endeavor to have middle school chapter advisors or their proxies judge high school events and high school teachers or their proxies judge middle school events.

### **Q: So how do you become a judge?**

**A:** Usually, you volunteer. Other times, you are “voluntold.” Normally, there is an email sent from the state office to the chapter advisors coming to the state conference asking about their judging availability. Some advisors have been judging particular events for years and know them inside and out; some will even bring their own equipment to judge. But those advisors are the exception rather than the rule.

Normally, the events are assigned on a first-come-first-served basis – so if you want to judge an event, you need to respond to the state advisor's email quickly. Those who don't respond quickly (or who don't respond at all) are assigned by the state advisor (and you probably don't want that...☺).

All kidding aside, it is critical that we have the advisors in the events. While we do have volunteers coming in from the community to help, they may not be as familiar with the event as a chapter advisor would be. Therefore, in order to facilitate the event, make sure it runs properly, and ensure there is someone on hand who can answer technical questions, we really need to have an advisor in each of the events.

### **Q: Will I have help when I judge?**

**A:** Yes. We try to get more than one judge per event. Sometimes, it's another advisor, sometimes it's a parent, sometimes it's a business/industry professional. And, starting in 2015, there will also be an event coordinator – an alumni representative who will be on hand to answer questions, check scores, etc. Please rely on the judging coordinator if you need help! They should introduce themselves at the beginning of the event or at the judges' orientation.

**Q: When do I judge?**

**A:** Some events will have all students entering the event participate in an on-site competition and so the judge will need to be present at a specified time and location.

Several contests are display only events and only require that a judge review the project that's turned in and grade it on a rubric. Usually, the judging for these events can take place any time after 7:00 p.m. on Thursday and before 6:00 p.m. on Friday, but the quicker you get the results in, the better, and the less likely someone will come chase you down. (And you REALLY don't want that!)

Some events require a display or portfolio to be judged to determine the top 5 or 10 teams/entries. This year, we have endeavored to get these to be turned in electronically by an early submission deadline. That gives our outside judges time to review them PRIOR to the conference...making Thursday night not so grueling for our judges. Once these entries are judged, a finalist list will be prepared and posted outside the Spruce Room. The finalists will then compete in some form of on-site competition (an interview or demonstration, or presentation).

If the finalists need to sign up for a time to present/demonstrate, they should do so as soon as the results are posted – for some events, this will be Thursday at check-in. For some, it may be early Friday morning. The judge would then also be expected to be at the on-site portion of the event to judge the work of the finalists.

**Q: Is there an orientation session for judges?**

**A:** Yes. This year, we have put into place several key people to help with coordinating judging. First, there is a judging coordinator who will conduct Judging Orientations throughout the conference. The first one is on Thursday night at 6:00 p.m. The second orientation is on Friday morning at 7:00 a.m. The third one is on Friday afternoon at 12:00 p.m. and the final one is on Saturday at 6:30 a.m. During these sessions, the coordinator will instruct the judges on what they need to do, how to read the rubrics, and what is contained in each judge's contest packet. Once assigned to an event, you will be instructed which orientation session to attend (we scheduled them so they are close to when you need to judge).

**Q: What do I need to bring?**

**A:** Nothing! All the materials you will need to properly judge the contest you've been assigned will be provided to you. When judging a contest, first report to the Conference Headquarters. You will be instructed where to go for your Orientation Session where you will be given the judging box for your event. In the judging box, you will find all of the materials and tools, pens, pencils, calculators, and a notebook containing:

- Judges' instructions
- Rules
- Scoring sheets (these will be numbered for your convenience). Several blank copies will also be provided just in case.
- Blank paper, pens, etc.

If your event requires that you hand out materials, those materials will be given to you when you pick up the judging box. If your event requires an on-site problem (the challenge the finalists will tackle on-site), the problem will be in an envelope in the box.



Also in the box will be a scoring notebook. In the notebook, there will be a score sheet for each contestant or team. There should be a label with that contestant's/team's ID number on it. When judging, we ask that you fill out only one score sheet per contestant or team (if your event is a team event) – even if you have multiple judges. Judges must come to a consensus on the scores.

***You must also break all ties! No ties are allowed!*** In some events, only a single winner from the state is allowed to advance to the national conference; we cannot send two. So **it's critical that you break ALL ties, regardless if you are judging a preliminary round or a final round.**

Please feel free to leave constructive criticism on the forms – in fact, we encourage you to do so! The feedback you leave will be used by the students and their advisors to revise/tweak projects in preparation for the TSA National Conference.

There will be an alumni event coordinator available to you to answer any questions you may have. You will verify your scores with the alumni coordinator before you turn your box back in to the judging coordinator at conference headquarters. The coordinator will then verify your scores again (this is to ensure that we do not have any mistakes in scoring (you would not believe how many simple adding mistakes we have found!) and that the person you judged as the winner really is the winner.

All scores must be returned to the Conference Headquarters as soon as possible after the conclusion of the event.

**If you need any help, or need a question answered,  
you can ALWAYS find help in the Conference Headquarters!**

