

Hi Ms. Murphy,

My name is Christine, and I am a rising senior at Eastlake High School in Sammamish, Washington. I'm writing to express interest in being a student advisor to the Washington Science Olympiad Board of Directors for the 2021-22 school year.

I have participated in Science Olympiad every year since I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and my experiences have really shaped my goals in science. When I was in elementary school, I only really enjoyed studying math and history, and, based on the less-than-engaging experiences I had at school, thought I hated science. However, in middle school I was recruited by a friend for her Science Olympiad team, and reluctantly agreed to participate in a few events, including Dynamic Planet. As I studied, I found I was fascinated by the evolving, complex ocean, and truly loved learning about everything from terrifying rip currents to gorgeous atoll reefs. That was the first moment I felt, as a woman and an outsider to STEM, capable of and excited by studying science.

Fast-forward 6 years, and Science Olympiad has kept that special place in my heart as the activity that catalyzed my love for science. My freshman year, I started competing in Astronomy, through which I explored galaxy formation, stellar evolution, and gorgeous deep sky objects; my learnings inspired me to start doing advanced astrophysics research, first on gas in galaxies, and for the past two years, on pulsars and gravitational waves. Though Astronomy is my "specialty", and I now dream of becoming a professional astrophysicist, I've still been competing in my original event Dynamic Planet for 6 years straight; I've also gotten to deeply study topics from climate change projections to aircraft wing design, which I was fascinated by but never would've studied in school, further reinforcing my love for science.

As a student advisor, I would relish the opportunity to give back to the community that provided my first encouragement towards a career in STEM, and I believe I can provide valuable perspective. Moving from winning two national medals at Evergreen, home to one of the state's best Division B programs, to my current school which rarely qualifies for state, I've observed two case studies in what makes competing a quality learning experience. I've observed that the gap in competition knowledge and culture between teams is enormous. I'd love to help work on outreach programs to provide extra resources to schools forming/expanding teams, such as "starter packs", assistance with advertising (especially to underrepresented students), and personal mentorship for new coaches. This would complement the great national training already available, by making it school-specific and easily accessible, and give new students a good shot at learning no matter their program's history.

The general level of interest in Science Olympiad is also key to creating an effective learning environment; Evergreen hosted 3-4 teams, naturally leading to a more competitive and exciting program. A huge factor at the high school level is the relevance of Science Olympiad to actual careers, which is often beat out by dedicated pre-professional organizations like HOSA, DECA, or FBLA. I would be excited to help the board brainstorm and pilot programs providing professional opportunities. I envision perhaps event-specific career webinars, discussing the real-world opportunities (i.e. an interview with real cryptographers for Code Busters or COVID-19 specialists for Disease Detectives); a system matching Division C mentors with Division B students, providing volunteer leadership experience for high school students; and perhaps piloting future trial events in partnership with professional organizations.

As a long-time participant and lover of Science Olympiad, I hope to be able to contribute valuable perspective and ideas to this organization that has really changed my life for the better, to pay forward the tireless work of many volunteers and competitors before me.

Best regards,

Christine Ye