

THE VJAS VOICE

The Virginia Junior
Academy of Science
Student MAGAZINE



BY STUDENTS
FOR STUDENTS

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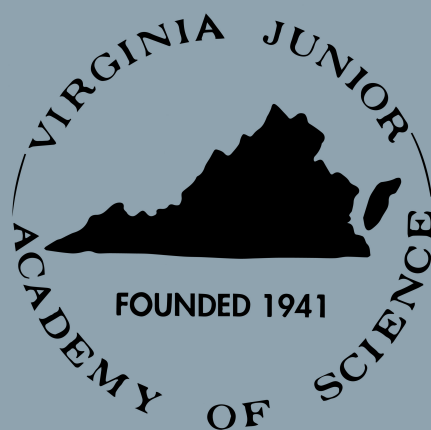
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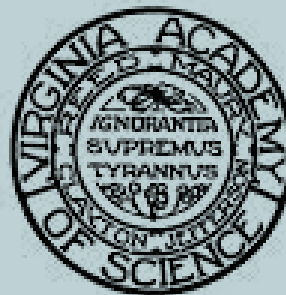
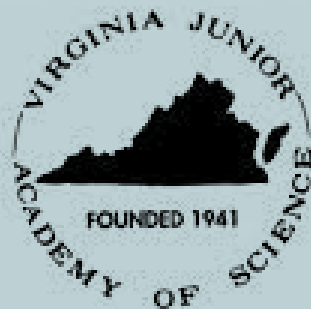
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VJAS Submission Updates

OVERVIEW

Submissions for the 2022 VJAS Symposium, hosted by William & Mary, are due through the Reviewr Platform on March 2. There will be a weeklong period of review in which sponsors can edit submissions to ensure all submissions have an equal chance and to limit the number of disqualifications. See the VJAS handbook on the VJAS website for more details on the submission process and requirements for the research papers.



@vjas.symposium



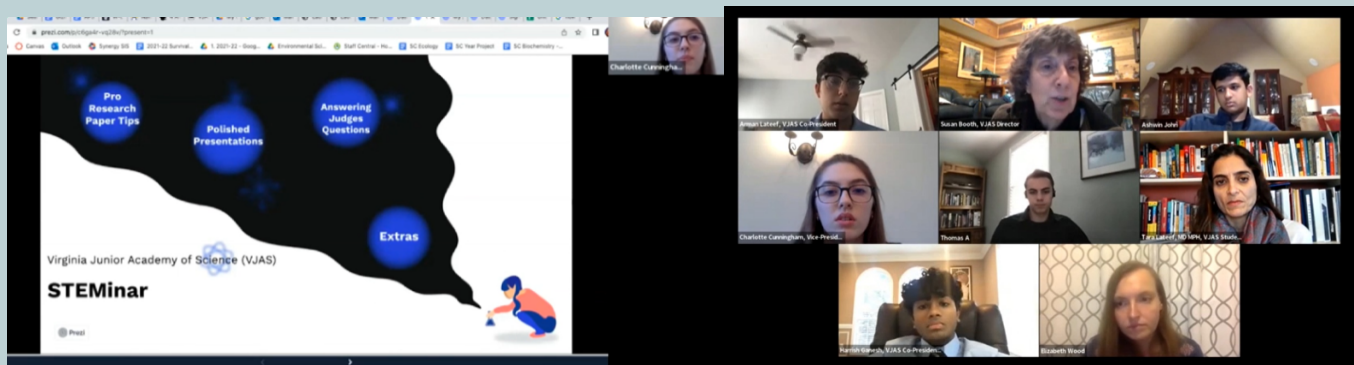
STEMINAR REVIEW

by Arman Lateef

The VJAS student officers proudly hosted our first STEMinar this year. Our goal was to engage prospective student scientists early in the process, provide information on how to be a part of the VJAS science community, and answer questions related to our upcoming annual symposium. This virtual and live event occurred on January 29, 2022.

The event was led and moderated by student officer and vice-president, Charlotte Cunningham, who briefed attendees on various aspects of preparing for the symposium including project ideas, putting together a research paper, and making an engaging scientific presentation.

The STEMinar also had a diverse set of panelists who shared their own experiences with VJAS. These included Mrs. Susan Booth (Director of VJAS), Arman Lateef and Harrish Ganesh (VJAS co-Presidents), Aswin Johri (VJAS communication liaison), Thomas Ackleson (previous student presenter), Ms. Elizabeth Wood (teacher and VJAS sponsor from Arlington Public Schools) and Dr. Tara Lateef (physician, scientist, and mentor to VJAS attendees and student officers). We had over 60 registrants and STEMinar attendees included middle and high school students and their parents and many also submitted questions ahead of time. We have received positive feedback from several students, and we may consider hosting another event in the near future. To watch the recording of the STEMinar, go to the 2022 Symposium page (<https://vjas.org/symposium-593706.html>).



VJAS Student Officers and Advisory Committee

Laasya Konidala, Secretary

The Virginia Junior Academy of Science Student Government is comprised of a team of high school students serving directly under the VJAS Senior Committee to gain leadership experience and contribute to the organization. From the Student Advisory Committee that contributes to monthly meetings to the President who leads community initiatives, the VJAS Student Government is geared to a diverse range of high school students with different skill sets and varying interests. Student officers receive the opportunity to virtually interact with one another during monthly meetings to propose their own thoughts and contribute to the discussion, even if their officer position is not directly involved in the current project, facilitating an interconnected exchange of ideas. Further, student officers attend biannual conferences for VJAS proceedings, forming a valuable network in the scientific community with teachers, mentors, the VJAS Senior Committee, and other members of the VJAS Student Government. Read more below to get insight on the VJAS Student Government from some of our current officers!

LAASYA KONIDALA (SECRETARY):

What does it mean to you to be a part of the VJAS Student Government?

HARRISH GANESH (CO-PRESIDENT):

What I enjoy the most as an officer of the VJAS is the ability to meet many like-minded people who are motivated to provide research opportunities for all students. To me, being a Co-President of VJAS means putting in my best efforts to improve the outreach of VJAS so that we can provide STEM educational resources for as many students as possible.

EUJINE KIM (CO EDITOR-IN-CHIEF):

I love being a part of a collective of students that are working to help other students during the long and arduous research journey. This position is so valuable to me because I am learning so much, and I am helping reach fellow students that are interested in the research process.

ARMAN LATEEF (CO-PRESIDENT):

VJAS has become a huge part of my academic journey and has provided amazing opportunities to present my work and discuss it with colleagues and esteemed scientists. It is an honor for me to serve the organization that has given me so much. I love working with my fellow student officers who are amazingly accomplished themselves and I really benefit from the mentoring provided by the senior committee and Director Booth.

VJAS Student Officers and Advisory Committee Laasya Konidala, Secretary

LAASYA KONIDALA:

What are some of the highlights and challenges of being an officer?

HARRISH GANESH:

An amazing aspect of being an officer is the opportunity to work with others and create constructive goals - as an officer, I'm able to interact with others in order to accomplish VJAS goals quickly and efficiently. A challenge of being an officer is that you need to be able to master multiple essential skills - time management, communication skills, organization, etc. When things are overwhelming, it's important to ensure that these essential skills are at your best ability, and that comes with time.

ASHWIN JOHRI (COMM. LIAISON):

The highlights are being able to meet like-minded colleagues and working together as a team!

ARMAN LATEEF:

I love interacting with other students who are doing interesting research and I also love helping to grow VJAS by recruiting more students and schools. Being a good officer takes time and commitment so it is challenging to balance everything on my schedule - but it is totally worth it!

LAASYA KONIDALA:

What are some projects or initiatives you worked on this year as an officer? What are some skills that you gained from these projects or from your involvement in the VJAS Student Government?

HARRISH GANESH:

This year, some projects I've worked on include organizing the annual VJAS symposium and helping host VJAS's first STEMinar! Some skills I've gained are the ability to create effective and clear goals for VJAS (goal-creation), time management, and effective communication skills!

EUJINE KIM:

This year, we have worked on the VJAS Voice as the main project of the co editors-in-chief. Through these projects, we have learned so many things, whether they be editing and graphic design or collaborative skills.

ASHWIN JOHRI:

As the Communications Liaison, I have been responsible for disseminating information about the VJAS announcements on social media like Instagram and soon Facebook, hoping to reach as many middle and high school students in Virginia as possible.

ARMAN LATEEF:

Being an officer has taught me how to be part of an effective team. It has also shown me that science isn't just about doing experiments; it is also about encouraging peer scientists and involving them in the important work of writing up and presenting their research.

VJAS Student Officers and Advisory Committee
Laasya Konidala, Secretary

To our fellow students:

LAASYA KONIDALA:

What is your message to students interested in applying for an officer position?

HARRISH GANESH:

When applying for an officer position, always ask yourself this question: What do I want to accomplish with my officer role? This will help guide your motivations and help yourself be the change you want to see within VJAS and the community around it.

ASHWIN JOHRI:

I would certainly recommend trying out for the available positions. VJAS is a state level organization offering an opportunity to contribute and collaborate with the members of the VJAS academy, as well as an incredible learning opportunity to work in a student government body. A diverse student representation is important and I would certainly hope that there is increasing representation from schools that do not traditionally participate in science fairs.

Applications for the VJAS Student Government are due April 30, 2022. We encourage you to start on these applications early and carefully read over the updated process found on the VJAS handbook! Best of luck to all applicants!

Presenting Research Projects for VJAS

Sattwik Nath, Student Advisory Committee

As Neil Armstrong said, “Research is creating new knowledge”. We all have an urge to know the unknown. This urge pushes us to study, examine and derive conclusions and result that were previously unknown. To propagate the newfound knowledge, the next step becomes presenting the idea to others so that they can learn and use the technique to develop further. Presenting these findings must be done in a way that is easy and consumable for others. One of the ways to achieve this is by creating a well-defined presentation of the research work. The presentation should have specific and brief information that are generally not included in the paper. The presenter is expected to elaborate on those points while presenting. The total presentation time is 10 minutes and 3 minutes of Q&A session.

This article will focus on how to prepare for presenting a research topic in VJAS. VJAS has their specific Guidelines and Format that needs to be followed for presentation. The detailed guidelines can be found at http://vjas.org/uploads/3/5/6/5/35657139/handbook_2022_final_aug_6.pdf

The presentation should have specific and brief information that are generally not included in the paper. The presenter is expected to elaborate on those points while presenting. The total presentation time is 10 minutes and 3 minutes of Q&A session.

The key areas of presenting are:

1. Presentation format - The presentation should be made in Power point or any presentation tool. The speaker will be critiqued in areas like, voice, general delivery, clarity and mannerism.
2. Preparation - The presenter must prepare to do an oral presentation of the paper. The general areas that the judges look for are general delivery, speaking voice, clarity, mannerisms, and the use of visual aids as well as on scientific accuracy.
3. Dress - Students presenting papers should be properly dressed in business casuals.

There are several ways of formatting a presentation. The format that I have used consists of:

- 1) State the challenge that the research aims to solve. This section should speak about the relevance of the problem that we are trying to solve.
- 2) In today’s world why are we not able to solve the challenge? This section focuses on what gets in the way for us to solve the problem.
- 3) How can the research solve the problem? This is where we state our hypothesis and get into the details of our research.
- 4) Finally, the research findings. We link the hypothesis to our actual findings.

Preparing for a research project can be difficult, but it is rewarding. Being able to present something that we care about, using the skills that we possess and to an audience that is willing to learn is truly a great experience.

VJAS Scholarships

SCHOLARSHIPS PROVIDED BY THE VIRGINIA ENVIRONMENTAL ENDOWMENT

The Frances and Sydney Lewis Environmental Science Scholarship

This \$5,000 four-year college scholarship may be awarded to the student whose project presented at the VJAS Research Symposium evidences the most significant contribution in the field of Environmental Science. The purpose of the award is to stimulate interest in environmental sciences and to enable promising young students to pursue undergraduate studies in a related field.

The Virginia Environmental Endowment (VEE) and the VJAS offer this scholarship in tribute to the outstanding and generous services of VEE Directors Emeriti, Frances A. Lewis and Sydney Lewis.

The Henry W. MacKenzie, Jr. Environmental Scholarship

This \$5,000 four-year college scholarship may be awarded to the student whose project presented at the VJAS Research Symposium evidences the most significant contribution in the field of Environmental Science dealing with the James River Basin and Chesapeake Bay. The purpose of the award is to stimulate interest in environmental sciences and to enable promising young students to pursue undergraduate studies in a related field, The Virginia Environmental Endowment (VEE) and the VJAS offer this scholarship in tribute to the outstanding and generous services of Judge Henry W. MacKenzie.

