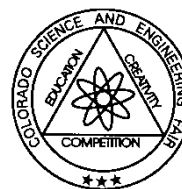


Colorado Science and Engineering Fair



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March 1, 2026

Dear Special Awards Judge:

We appreciate your willingness to represent your organization as a Special Awards Judge at the Colorado Science & Engineering Fair (CSEF) on Thursday, **April 9, 2026**. The attached instruction sheet covers the details of your participation. Also included are some thoughts on judging and a scorecard used by the Grand Awards Judges. We ask that you please observe time limits for judging interviews so that all students are treated equally.

NOTE: We have discontinued the large group information session at the beginning of the judging time. We ask instead that SAO judges view the SAO Orientation power point on-line ahead of time.

Check-in for SAO Judges will be at the **SOUTH** end of the Lory Student Center, just outside Room 302 on the Colorado State University, Fort Collins campus. Special Awards Organization will be able to check-in any time between 12:30 and 2:00 p.m. The interview time for SAO judges will not begin until 1:30 – we want to give the grand awards judges time to get their process started as they need to get things done earlier than the special awards organizations. This will allow us to spread out the number of judges (grand and special) in the exhibit hall through the entire interview period (1:30 – 5:00 p.m. for SAOs). This also means that there **WILL NOT** be a time for SAO judges to view the projects without students present.

In order to expedite the special award judging process, links to the student's abstracts will be available by March 27th on the 2026 CSEF web page. Please remember that the projects you are considering may be scattered through several categories. You will also be able to preview digital project presentations that are parts of what you will find on their board during interview in [MySciFair](#). Please note that you do NOT need to register in order to view the projects.

Upon completion of judging, please submit the completed official CSEF Special Award Judging Form to the SAO Judges Station just outside **Room 302**. Any certificates, awards or letters to be presented by the CSEF should be delivered with the judging results to the SAO Judges' Station. If your award is to be mailed to the student at a later date, please supply the student with a letter explaining the award payment process and a contact for the award. We can letter any certificates for you on Friday during the Award Ceremony Set-Up time. Special arrangements must be made for awards that will not be presented at the Awards Ceremony on Friday, April 10th. Contact information for students and their parents will be provided upon request **AFTER** the CSEF by emailing the CSEF Executive Director at director@csef-colo.org.

Due to the limited amount of on-campus parking, CSEF has arranged for off-campus parking on Thursday. Shuttle busses will run between the **Timberline Church** and the Lory Student Center from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

To reach Timberline Church (2908 S. Timberline Road) from I-25, take Exit 265 (Harmony Road) West, to South Timberline Road. Turn North (right) onto S. Timberline Road to Custer Drive which is just past the church. Take the second right (Illinois Drive) into the **Timberline Church**. Park in the first two parking areas on the **left**. The attached maps should be of some help in finding the church.

Thank you for your assistance in making the 71st Annual Colorado Science & Engineering Fair a great success. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions, comments or suggestions.

Sincerely,
CSEF Board of Directors

Colorado Science & Engineering Fair - Instructions to Special Awards Judges

Thursday, April 9, 2026

All SAO judges should check in at the SOUTH end of the Lory Student Center just outside of Room 302 to be assigned a caucusing room prior to entering the Exhibit Hall (Grand Ballroom).

SCHEDULE:

12:30 – 2:00 p.m. – Staggered Check-In (pick up name tag(s) and judging form and room assignment) – **Outside Room 302**

1:30 – 5:00 p.m. – Student Interviews – **Grand Ballroom**

5:00 p.m. – Exhibit Hall is Closed to Special Award Judges

5:30 p.m. – Special Award Organization Results Due – **Outside Room 302**

Refreshments will be available for Judges in the Longs Peak service room all afternoon.

JUDGING CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

Special Award Organizations set up their own award criteria – please contact the organization contact if you have any questions. Recommended judging guidelines for special award judges and a sample-rating card used by Grand Award Judges are attached for your review. These guidelines may be modified as appropriate for your awarding organization.

STUDENT INTERVIEWS:

Personal contact between student and judge is important both for evaluation and for the student's learning experience. In consideration of the many judges needing to interview students, please try to limit each interview to 10 minutes. However, do not abbreviate interviews for projects that seem less competitive. Use a constructive tone in your interviews – remember to provide encouragement for the continued participation of all students. To further encourage students, please complete a judges' comment card for EACH student (or project) you interviewed.

REPORTING RESULTS:

Results will be collected at the Judges Station just outside of **Room 302**. **Before leaving**, complete, review, and sign the OFFICIAL Special Award Judging Form given to your organization at check-in and turn it in at the Judges Station. You will be assigned a room at check-in for your judging team to hold conferences. Any changes to the awards being given on the day of judging need to be approved by a CSEF representative **PRIOR** to completing the judging form!!

CAUTIONS:

All judges' deliberations must take place in your assigned room and NOT in the Exhibit Hall or LSC hallways where parents, teachers, and students could overhear. Do not discuss projects in hallways, restrooms, etc. There is much curiosity at a science fair and your judge's badge will attract attention to offhand comments. Similarly, be careful with any notes you take – we are happy to collect and shred any personal notes you may want to discard at the end of the day.

Do not take students' notebooks or other parts of a display out of their project areas.

Do not write on or change students' notebook or displays.

Special Award Judges SHALL NOT take photos of projects or students – CSEF can provide the special award organization with copies of the official photos.

PARKING:

We request that you use the shuttle service provided from the Timberline Church. However, if this arrangement is unworkable there are various parking options on campus (visit the Parking & Transportation Services website for details and to download the CSU parking app - [Parking | Parking & Transportation Services | Colorado State University \(colostate.edu\)](#)).

Special Award Judging Recommended Guidelines

Judges should evaluate:

1. How well a student followed the scientific experimental or engineering design process;
2. The detail and accuracy of research data book;
3. Whether tools/equipment were used in the best way.

Judges should look for:

1. How well-thought-out the research is;
2. How significant the project is in its field;
3. How thorough the work was done;
4. Was something left out?
5. Did a student start with four experiments and finish only three?

Judges should applaud those students who can speak freely and confidently about their work. They are not interested in memorized speeches -- they simply want to TALK with the student about the research to see if the student has a good grasp of the project from start to finish. Besides asking the obvious questions, judges often ask questions to test insight into the project such as “What didn’t you do?” and “What would be your next step?”

Scoring should be on the work done by the student(s) and not on the value of accessory equipment either borrowed or purchased.

Criteria for judgment should be based on scientific thought, originality or concept, thoroughness, clarity and dramatic value, and skill.

The decision of the judges is final.