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ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING 2020 STUDENT PAPER CONTEST FINAL

Due to the pandemic that we are facing globally, many of our Regional Student Paper Contest qualifiers have been held virtually this year. In fact only 3 of the 14 competitions were held physically before the many countries placed heavy restrictions on social movement, and the majority of us were required to remain at home, with universities being closed until further notice.

We are very happy to announce that those competitions which have been held virtually to date have been done so with much success and we just have 4 regional competitions left to run.

With regards to the COVID-19 virus, whilst restrictions are being lifted partially in some places, travel is still limited and borders remain closed. Social distancing is still being advised globally, and the health and safety of our student and professional members is always at the forefront in planning for SPE activities. Further to this, we are not confident that travel restrictions will be sufficiently lifted in time for staff to secure visas and tickets for the RSPC winners to attend ATCE, and want to enable contestants to stay ahead of the curve, instead of chasing potential disappointment.

In previous years we have experienced issues in securing visas for many of our students to enter the USA to compete in the finals of the Student Paper Contest, and with the situation as it is this year, and in the interest of fairness to all, we have decided to continue with the 'virtual' competition for the final. This is in order to enable the competition to go ahead, whilst ensuring that all our regional student winners can compete on a fair platform, whilst abiding to any health and safety restrictions from international advisory bodies.

The 2020 Student Paper Contest will be held in the same manner that the virtual regional contests have been held, with students submitting their recorded presentation in advance of the competition. Their videos will be played to a panel of judges who will be present at ATCE, on a large screen, within a room where there will be seating for a small audience to also view the presentations. As with the virtual competitions, the presentations will be followed with a live Q&A with the student, which will be conducted over Microsoft Teams. The winners will be announced at ATCE, and the prize will be travel and accommodation to ATCE 2021 taking place in Dubai. If regional winners wish to attend ATCE in Denver we will not be preventing them from doing so, but their travel and accommodation will not be a part of their prize this year. We are offering RSPC winners alternative prizes due to the change in structure of the competition.

Whilst this is an unprecedented change, we also view it as an exciting opportunity to explore 'virtual' opportunities to expand the contest, and make it more accessible for all international students in future years. Under no circumstances does it mean that we will be concluding the original format of the competition.

We thank you for your understanding during this time, your loyalty to SPE, and hope you are all staying safe and well. As always your Society is here to serve you, and if you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact either James Whitaker – Global Young Member Programs Manager (jwhitaker@spe.org), or Samantha Armstrong – Senior Manager – Member Programs (sarmstrong@spe.org).

Sincerely,

Samantha Armstrong

Senior Manager – Member Programs

Americas Office