

# **Colorado Science and Engineering Fair: A Brief History 1955 – 2020**

For nearly 65 years, the Colorado Science and Engineering Fair has been an avenue for the students of the state of Colorado to showcase their scientific and engineering research projects to the public. This state level competition was the brain child of Frederick W. Brown and Charles L. Bragaw of the National Bureau of Standards back in 1955. Along with support from the Colorado Engineering Council and the Colorado-Wyoming Academy of Science, the first Colorado-Wyoming Science Fair was held April 28, 1956 with 155 participants in both the junior and senior high school divisions from around Colorado. While Wyoming students did not participate the first year, they were involved from 1957 through 1969. In 1970, the science fair became an all-Colorado event and its name was changed to the Colorado State Science Fair. Now roughly 320 students from 13 regional science fairs in Colorado attend the CSEF each year, representing over 100 schools.

Colorado's Dr. Samuel Newman, a surgeon and Colorado Medical Society member was involved in the early years of the National Science Fair (now the International Science and Engineering Fair) and in 1957, encouraged the Colorado-Wyoming Science Fair to become affiliated with Science Service (now Society for Science & the Public) in order to send students to the national competition. Beginning in 1958, the top two senior division high school winners were sent to compete in the national competition and CSEF has been sending students ever since. Now the CSEF sends the top five senior division winners and many of the 13 regional science fairs also send students to compete in the Regeneron ISEF, giving Colorado a delegation of around 25 projects each year at the international competition.

The Colorado State Science Fair was headquartered at the National Bureau of Standards in Boulder from 1956 through 1968. At that point, the Colorado Medical Society took over management and key support of the science fair until 1978 when it again moved back to Boulder and was run by the National Institute for Telecommunication Sciences. Then in 1981, the CSEF moved to Colorado State University in Fort Collins, CO. Now, the CSEF is housed in the College of Natural Sciences Education & Outreach Center at CSU, with its current and longest tenured director, Ms. Courtney Butler is located.

In 1977 the Colorado State Science Fair was incorporated as a non-profit organization to coordinate and operate the state science fair. A Board of Directors, made up of representatives from the sponsors was formed to control and manage the corporation. Sponsors during the first year of incorporation included the American Cancer Society, Colorado Division, Cinderella City Merchants Association, the Colorado Engineering Council, the Colorado Medical Society and its auxiliary, the Denver Post, the National Bureau of Standards, NOAA, and the Office of Telecommunications/Institute for Telecommunication Science. In the beginning of the corporation, the name of the event and the organization were the same. However, in 1993, the event title was changed to the current Colorado Science and Engineering Fair.