



FIRST[®] Robotics Competition and FIRST Hall of Fame (HOF)

Virtual Chairman's Chat - Live Q&A

Questions from the December 2020 FIRST Chairman's Chat

Introduction

The Chairman's Chat panel consisted of a group of *FIRST* judges and Hall of Fame (HOF) team representatives. The HOF is the group composed of all past Championship Chairman's Award Winners. The panel provided advice based on their experiences with the *FIRST* Robotics Competition Chairman's Award process, but does not represent *FIRST* as a whole. This was not a Rules Session, it was a discussion. The judges and team representatives were not speaking for *FIRST* or even necessarily their teams. It was an informative exchange of the Judges and team members, sharing their Insights, experiences and expectations of their process with regards to the Chairman's Award.

This document is intended to recap the Virtual Chairman's Chat and to answer additional questions that were not answered during the webinar. Questions were grouped into categories so that similar questions were grouped together.

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[Link to Page Chairman's Chat Video is Located](#)

Opening Questions for the HOF Team Representatives

Why does the Chairman's award matter?

The Chairman's Award is more important than the robot and you can learn even more from it. Our goal in *FIRST* is For Inspiration and Recognition in Science and Technology, and to do that we need to change the culture and ultimately that is not going to happen by building a single robot. That is going to happen when we as a community go out and do things in the world. We need to make a real difference and show people that science and technology is not just nerdy tv characters, but it's everyone and anyone. That's how we **make a real difference** and how we **solve the big problems** we are facing: whether it's a cure for cancer, energy solutions, or finding a vaccine for COVID. These all need a STEM solution and if we don't get more STEM professionals it will negatively impact the world in the future. Go out and do things, make a difference, show the world what STEM enthusiasts can achieve. Chairman's helps create that next generation of problem solvers, and by doing that we achieve the mission of *FIRST*.

How do you decide what to focus on in your submission?

- Give your team enough time to prepare
- Consider the best way to communicate different types of information. What would work better in the essay vs presented face-to-face or in print.
- Document what you do to make sure you have everything you need when the time comes to write the essay and to be able to see how they compare over the years.
- Break up information into groups to determine what is most important to communicate.
- Determine your team's values and what you care about. We do our best when we do what we are passionate about. Working to be the best version of your own team. It's okay to be different. Focus on what you do best and in doing so it will be more fun!

How do you write a compelling Chairman's Essay?

- Brainstorm. Get everything out there and cut the extra later. Use index cards/sticky notes -- to determine which are most important and form a skeleton of topics and subpoints and then give to the storytellers to create something compelling.
- Review your documentation form to make sure you got everything.
- Organize what you have done. Outline the content.
- Break down into manageable subtopics. 3-5 major points. If it is not obvious, combine similar elements until you see patterns.
- Write with one voice, develop a good flow to create a story about who you are and what you are trying to accomplish.
- Start with way too many characters and information. Maybe 20,000 - 40,000 characters, and then edit that down to be a tighter and tighter, more compelling submission. You want that essay to be packed with as many of your accomplishments and feel for who your team is as possible.
- Tell stories about how programs developed and grew. Include the highlights and the factual information - like numbers and collaborations.
- The judges are looking for the information they will need to have a conversation with the team
- Subtopics help them to organize the information: Local Community, Diversity Programs, *FIRST* impact.

How do you nail the presentation?

- **Practice!**
- Practice both running the lines of the presentation as well as the Question & Answer session (Q&A)
- Practice the presentation time and the 12 minute workflow with the Q&A. Presenters will be more confident, and less likely to ramble.
- Have presenters divide up the topics to become experts on.
- Know the strength of the presenters as well as the content.
- Each presenter should have points they want to make sure they get across during Q&A, if an opportunity becomes available.
- In the essay, the judges are looking for information to develop conversations with the team and see how that essay information and the conversation dovetails together. If you practice, you will be prepared for the seemingly obscure questions that come from a tidbit in the essay.
- Have fun and be excited. Even when you practice.

How would you change things for a virtual presentation? (answered by both judges & teams)

- In the same way you practice your presentation, **practice the technical side**. Nothing is more stressful for a team to find out in the moment that the dead spot in the house is in your room. Do you know how to share your screen, how you are going to transition from speaker to speaker within the platform. What will you do if connection with one of the presenters breaks?
- It's easy to lose the personal connection. Your excitement level and passion can bridge that gap.
- Record yourself in practice, are you looking at the screen? How are you conveying this information? Are you bouncing? Fidgeting? Looking at your phone when it's not your turn to speak?
- Don't let presentation materials overwhelm the personal connection time. Detailed visuals will be difficult to communicate on a small screen, simpler images will convey your points more effectively.
- If there are weird connection delays you need to be ready for them. If someone gets hung up, the rest of the team needs to pick it up and run with it. **Plow through the technical difficulties**. Practice the possible problems too. If comfortable with the material, you will get through the technical difficulty easier as a team.

Opening Questions for the Judges

Why is the Chairman's Award considered the most prestigious award in *FIRST*?

It's because the Chairman's Award is bigger than any one component of a team. Chairman's is about research, learning, problem solving, helping others, bringing people along in the journey, and sustainability of those efforts. Not just go build a robot and do a food drive. It's about bringing communities along with you. **It's bigger than any one area, and bringing people along on the journey with us.**

The award isn't important, it's everything you do to get to the award. All of the pieces that come together and every team that applies and presents for it has a stake in the efforts of the team's endeavors. Overall the community grows from all of the combined acts of the teams to get to the award.

Because even when you don't win the work builds better individuals and a stronger team. The goal is not to win, but to build a generation of students who know how to win. Going through the process, you learn so much about how to interview, how to write a persuasive argument, and you are better prepared and your team develops, because by putting on paper all of the cool things your team has accomplished, the team realizes what they are capable of together.

Judges, what do you want to learn about the teams from their submission?

1. **Team Identity.** What is it that makes your team tick? What have you been doing? Why? How is that building your team for the future?
2. **Resource utilization.** How is the team utilizing their resources? What interesting things are they doing with what they have? What kind of impact are they making?

*Newly revised executive summary question.

Every community is different and this question gives you that specific place to lay that foundation without having to use the space in the essay.

Describe your community along with how your team addresses its unique opportunities and circumstances.

[\(To learn more about the changes to the Executive Summary questions, check out the *FIRST* Hall of Fame presentations\)](#)

3. **Sustainability.** This is not the exact same thing every year, more about staying true to your passion, but can be other things. Stay excited about what you do.
4. **Documentation.** Make note of what you have done.
Judge viewpoint: Did the team verify it? Did they document, or how have they been involved. It comes through in the discussion.

[FIRST Documentation form](#) is valuable in that respect.

Great for judges to be able to verify, but also a moment for the team to capture what cool things they were part of. Facts in the essay, the judges then make notes so they ask more questions.

[Download the form, and start completing it for your team's documentation.](#)

What makes a compelling Chairman's Essay?

- A well written document. It will have a theme, grammar, and structure that gives a solid background. Have an english teacher or technical writer look over the essay.
 - The essay is the first impression the judges get of the team and sets the tone for expectations.
- The impact. What was the impact of the things you did?
- The pull through of what really happened. The stories. As part of engaging the community in xxx-- we were about to do xxx and xxx and the impact was xxx. The pull through of the impact you had of that engagement.

Champs CA

How do you level up from being a state chairman's winner to a world's chairman's winner?

- Each year, reflecting on what your team was good at doing, what could you do better, how could you improve your team, and how can you grow your programs?
 - Tracking progress over the years, documenting experiences and being able to talk about the growth of your programs.
 - Strategic planning over the summer, creating 1, 5, 10 year goals for not just chairman's, but for the team and talking about the intentional progress we made.
 - Focus on something that is really unique about your team and will stand out about your team and go all in on it. Especially if it is something recent.
-

COVID-19

Judges, what are you expecting (hoping) to see in light of COVID-19 limitations/ changes to engagement?

- The judges know there are no parades this year, every area of team experience is different, teams are different and there are a lot of new limitations.
- How are you helping and engaging your community? How are you still learning? How are you helping other people to learn and problem solve? How are you learning together?
- If your identity is largely about supporting a group in your community, how have you been innovative in your support with new limitations? Or have you been supporting your community in a whole new way?
- The judges are still looking for that connection/engagement, and the learning, growth and the journey that takes place

One Answer for these 3 questions:

- I hear what you are saying about tracking hours, but we have not been able to do any meaningful outreach since last February - we have not even been able to meet! What can we say about what we have been doing for the last year when it looks like we've done very little?
- With COVID affecting us all currently, How do you think it will affect teams going for Chairman's with regards to outreach and making an impact safely in the next 3 years? How do judges plan on judging equitably when it comes to opportunity and accessibility?
- What have *FIRST* teams been doing during the pandemic for outreach? Although we can do stuff online, it's hard for us to do anything with the community outside of our own school.

- #1 BE SAFE, there is NOTHING you have to do.
- Resource utilization. One of those limited resources is engagement, community engagement is going to vary for each team with the various school and state regulations they have to comply with. There will be teams that were able to go back into the classroom and teams that had to remain 100% virtual. Looking to see how you are building on what you were able to accomplish and how you plan to bring that into the next season. How did you use the time and the engagement you had?
- Judges are going to judge each team equitably within their specific circumstances.
- The pandemic has changed the prism of outreach, community pulling together, and of what the judges expect of teams.
- There are parents struggling at home with their children and *FIRST* LEGO League teams -- this new challenge creates an opportunity to engage them in coding and robotics.
- It is easy to get bogged down in all of the things we can't do. Look for how you can be innovative. There are great needs now, and even greater opportunities to be creative and innovative -- BUT ABOVE ALL BE SAFE.

Could falling short during the COVID era potentially diminish the "value" of our pre-COVID outreach?

Teams will be judged on the past 3 years, with an emphasis on the past 12-18 months. As such there will be significant emphasis on the "COVID era". That being said, not all teams will have the same opportunities and ability to work during the current restrictions. It's important to let the judges know what restrictions and resource limitations you faced and how you managed to maximize your impact within those constraints.

Documentation

To follow up on my question "How do you measure impact," the way we have been measuring impact is "We have spent XX hours mentoring FLL" (the hope is that something in there changed someone's life). How do we know what the actual impact was?

Hours that you helped other teams. ([Chairman's Definitions again](#)) Did you help them sustain and get excited about *FIRST*. Pictures are great proof. Are they all just smiling faces or are they showing the team working together. Do you know how the FLL team(s) did at the competition? Did you go cheer for them?

- **Follow up with groups that you help.** Where did they go after graduation? What is the purpose of the outreach? Did the 5th graders move on to an FTC team-- what happened in the follow up?
- **Sometimes you can overdo it with numbers.** There needs to be value in the numbers you give. Give deeper breakdowns and compare your statistics with a baseline. There are also powerful anecdotes that when paired with good statistics become powerful.
- **The reasons teams are doing things.** Is it just a checkbox, or something the team is passionate about. There is a point that goes beyond the checkbox. There is a feeling that goes along with activities that transform into passion.

How do you document your work well so that you can use it for your essay?

- Online documents, such as google docs that can be easily shared and edited from anywhere.
- If there were numbers you tracked, include a date so you know when that number was last updated. Kept those in online spreadsheets.
- Dividing the content into sections: community outreach, *FIRST* specific Outreach, government advocacy... then under each area - each specific event and any data related to that event, and where we might want to include that information, in the essay, presentation, video and/or documentation.
- It may not be perfect the first year, but adapt it as you go to make it work over the years. Keep the multiple years together, so you can see your growth over time.

Essay

What do you feel teams should be most mindful of with the rule change related to changing the Chairman's timeframe from the past 2-5 years to the past 3 years, and emphasis on the past 12-18 months?

The good thing about the past 5 years, you can see how the team is progressing and sustaining over that long period of time.

The difficulty is that at the 5th year those things may not be so relevant to the team any longer, and the student talking may not be familiar with the programs they are referring to. Changing the question back to the 3 years, will ensure a better likelihood that the presenters will have experience with the questions content. 12-18 months shows more of the team's trajectory moving forward in the near future.

What ways do you think are the most useful way of using your voice in the essay?

A writing style can keep a judge engaged and help the flow of the content or it can be distracting. If the style of the writing lends to the understanding of the content, it is helpful. If it distracts from or confounds the message, it is a liability. It is a challenging balance. Have fun and be creative in writing the essay, but also be open to constructive criticism. The goal of the essay is to communicate. Your goal is to write an effective, persuasive essay. If the creative approach you took was not effective, remember it is reflective of the team, not one individual's voice.

In the description of the award, it specifically asks about sustainability. But also, it states it wants to focus on the last couple of years. How do you recommend balancing those two?

Explain how any recent initiative is currently sustainable and will remain sustainable into the future. In addition, when discussing past initiatives, focus on how they are doing now and what has allowed them to be sustainable.

Should essays be more focused on facts & figures - leaving the stories for the presentation - or can the essay include stories, quotes, and "personality"?

There's no "right" style for a Chairman's essay. Teams should tailor their own style to match their strengths and the content of their submission. For some teams this will be more like an academic paper (facts and figures), while for others it may feel more like a magazine profile, with anecdotes, quotes, and personality. You need to choose the style that you think you can make most memorable for the judges and conveys the most impact. But remember, you also have the presentation, which is where many teams feel more comfortable showcasing personality.

To get to the 20k character limit, is creative punctuation allowed or looked down upon? Example: using & instead of "and," or no space between sentences?

- Just to clarify, the essay limit is 10,000 characters.
- The flow and grammar does impact the judges experience in reading. Improper grammar, like no spaces, is distracting and impacts the judges' experience.
- Team's have different opinions about the usage of ampersands. Review [previous winning Chairman's essays](#) to see how teams successfully handled style decisions.

- There are places, like abbreviating programs if referred to earlier. For example: *FIRST* TECH Challenge (FTC), and then later referring to an FTC program. But be careful not to abbreviate programs the judges may not be familiar with.

In terms of stylistic changes for the essay, what about using italics or bolding words, or using an ellipsis?

The form you will submit your essay and executive questions into will convert all text into plain text. No Italics and bold formatting remain. When writing your essay, leave these out and find other ways, if you need to emphasize something, for example: ALL CAPS.

Should the essay be written in first-person or third-person?

This is definitely a team/personal preference. The most important part is that it remains consistent for the entirety of the essay. Some people feel that a first-person essay makes things seem more personal and relatable, while others prefer a third-person essay because of the sense of formality it provides.

How to go about answering the specific question regarding engagement with sponsors?

The Executive Summary question is: Describe your team's innovative strategies to recruit, retain, and engage your sponsors within the past 3 years.

As with all of the questions, it is dependent on your team's particular experience with your sponsors. If you have not yet developed methods to stay in touch and recruit new sponsors, one approach to answering this question and a valuable exercise for your team could be -- to develop plans for the next season or start email updates or create a team sponsor recruitment letter.

What is the best way to get the most students involved with Chairman's on your team in order to maximize production when working on it?

It is okay if the size of the group changes from year to year. Some years you may have many, other years only a few. It is more important that your whole team is involved with your team identity, values, and outreach efforts. But here are a few ways to maximize involvement.

- Start early before kickoff, so there is less competition for those who want to work on the robot.
- Be flexible to allow people to come in and contribute when their subsystem on the robot is not being utilized.
- Involvement in the efforts of the team's activities is part of the Chairman's efforts. Identify those contributions throughout the year: outreach, video, social media, working with other teams, etc.
- Make it easily accessible online, so students can contribute outside of build meetings.
- Make it fun.
- Candy!

Judging

Judges - Do judges like cheesy inspirational stories?

Judges like authentic stories. Cheese can be fine, but must provide a purpose. Avoid the presentation being more about the theme than the content. Getting the message across is the primary goal. Convey a good sense of what you have accomplished.

How do you pick the cutest puppy in the box? What I mean is that there are a lot of very competitive teams out there for the Chairman's Award, but only one gets chosen.

As judges, we have to look past the cutest "puppy in the box". It can be a difficult task because we are introduced to so many deserving teams, or "cute puppies". The exposure to so many incredible teams is the reason so many judges return each year. Ultimately each team controls the judges decisions. Judges have to find the most deserving team who best meets the published criteria for being a Chairman's Award (CA) team. Judges will use each team's submissions, essay, and Chairman's interview to evaluate each team. Teams have to do their work to produce an essay that fully describes their team. That work should carry through into the CA interview room, where the team shows what the judges have learned from the essay is authentic. Teams should not be satisfied with merely meeting expectations. They should want to EXCEED expectations. Judges have to look for the teams that do more than just meeting the criteria, because there are so many "cute puppies".

Does the Chairman's essay also have an impact on judging for other awards, like the Engineering Inspiration Award?

The Chairman's essay only affects the judging for the Chairman's Award and is only read by the CA judges.

Are the judges for the chairman's the same every single time?

There are Judges who love Chairman's! But there are also new judges rotating in on a regular basis. Chairman's judges are volunteers. It will depend on how often the judges return to volunteer at an event. Sometimes you may run into the same judges at an event over and over again, or new judges quite often. When possible, judge advisors will do their best to pair veteran judges with newer judges to provide better experience in the room.

I love the point about focusing on impact. How do you measure impact?

That is more challenging, since it is more qualitative in nature. There is often data you can use, Example, 15% of our Summer Camp attendees enjoyed the robotics experience so much they joined an FLL team. Some other possible methods may be stories or testimonials of the experience. How it impacted your team members and the people involved in the effort you are talking about.

Other ideas include:

- Testimonial quotes
- Letters from organizations in appreciation
- Pictures
- Follow-up Survey

Do Chairman's Judges only use the essay and presentation for judging?

The scope of the judging, is what comes into the room and the essay. The presentation, documentation, team binders. and the essay. It is important that judges at the event can separate their prior experience with teams and only judge based on what is brought into the room at this particular time.

What is one immediate thing that stands out that judges are not much in favor of?

As a group, judges do not want to see displays of UN-Gracious Professionalism. Judges want to see the team in their best light: present an articulate story, told from the students/student's perspective. This should not be the coaches perspective or words. Also, if you don't know an answer, don't fake it! We don't expect all students to attend every event. It's OK to say—I didn't attend that one or I am not sure.

Do judges like all the stats?

Judges love stats that are accurate, with some form of proof—like pictures--that help tell the story

Outreach

Do you have to start a lot of other teams to win chairmans? Or can you focus on doing a good job sustaining your team?

First make certain to understand the [definition of "Starting a team"](#).

But to answer your question, be the best version of who your team is and go for it, but you don't have to start teams, build a kit bot or attend parades. If you are great at starting teams, go all in and [document](#) it for the judges.

There is no secret formula to winning Chairman's. There are many teams that don't have the resources to start teams, but find creative ways to sustain them and support those with the resources. Gauging your team's abilities, finding your outreach niche. Investing in your mission is a strong approach to chairman's success.

Presentation

Do you have advice on training younger members who are joining your Chairmans essay/presentation team, as a senior and Chairmans veteran?

Be patient but enthusiastic. Start with the research of what goes into the submission. Get them involved from the very start with the outline. Even if they do not feel they have enough information to decide what goes into the submission, make sure they are a part of the discussion on the whys. Hearing those discussions or debates can give them an understanding later for why those decisions were made and whether or not it might be more appropriate some place else or to include or not include in a year or two when they are in charge. Make sure they have read your previous submission or even maybe 2 or 3 years back. Have them review past binders and watch the videos. Tell the stories again. Yes, you know all of the team stories, make sure to pass them down. Laugh with them. Help them understand the history of your team, how programs evolved, and who was instrumental in making those things happen. Then develop new stories with them to carry through to the future groups they work with.

What kind of balance is appropriate for metrics/emotion in the presentation - is there one which is better to use in presentation?

If you emphasize everything, nothing is important. If you just read off facts, you may lose the judges attention. You used the word correctly in your question -- use a balance of both. Don't focus too much on the detailed numbers -- those should be in your essay, but do mention significant metrics that help tell the story. Emotion can be tricky, but often comes across best in a personal connection to specific experiences. Make sure the use of emotion in your stories is coming across as genuine and effective. A good balance of both should help you to present a more compelling case for your team.

I have seen some teams with an exact script for their presentations, including planned hand gestures and such. Do judges prefer to see these highly-rehearsed presentations or more natural and casual but still well-spoken presenters?

The benefit of an exact and timed - well rehearsed script is that you will get all of your points made before the end of the time. The students should feel well prepared to give the best information possible and know they will be able to do so before they are cut off. Being prepared will give the students more confidence going into the room. Few people are equipped to naturally speak of all of their points with a group in a specific amount of time.

Hand gestures can help to emphasize points in your presentation. Ours always came from an experience during practice. If it seemed effective at the moment, we made note, and said -- let's do that. But students should never be made to do something that is not comfortable for them. If it feels awkward, it will come across as awkward to an audience. Inflection, gestures and wording should be comfortable for each student -- modified if needed to make it work for them, consistently.

If the presenters know they have enough time to cover all the planned team's attributes, stories and accomplishments, they will be less stressed and have more fun.

How do you figure out who is going to present or get the rest of the team involved?

We did interviews using previous presenters with the newly interested to gauge chemistry. It's not just about who can read a script the best, it is about chemistry as a group, who is flexible to changes, can take criticism, roll with missteps, has an easy going attitude, is a team player, and is willing to run through one more time when they are exhausted. It takes a lot of practice to get the presentation right. It gets very repetitive and at times boring, but if they work hard it is something they can be proud they were a part of and the experience of working together, learning how to answer questions quickly and concisely will be skills that can take them far.

How do you build team chemistry when you are only able to interact over zoom?

Whether in person or online, the best way to bond is to have fun. Experience things together. Share stories. Take some time to play games. Get to know one another. Those relationships come across on screen, as well as in person. Though it was before COVID, I worked with many presenters and they all had stories from their year(s) on the presenting team - little had to do with the time in the room. Most of it came from practice time, breaks during practicing, and laughing through it.

The second most important thing is to support one another. Mistakes will happen, lines will be forgotten, people get nervous... be there. Be encouraging and caring to each other. You are a team within a team.

What shouldn't you do during the presentation?

- Fidget
- Ramble
- Multitask
- Tackle complex topics

Submission Organization

How to organize/plan out your chairman's submission beforehand so it doesn't seem rushed at the last minute?

You need a strategic plan!

- Brainstorm a list of every possible thing you could talk about in your essay.
- Organize these items into well defined categories
- Pick the categories which are most important to your team and you believe convey the most impact
- Rank the items within each category, and also rank the categories themselves, in terms of importance to the submission
- Now you have an outline and priority list for your essay. From here you can assign categories/items to multiple students to work on.
- By breaking it up into smaller sections like this, the essay becomes much more manageable and organized

When giving the presentation or writing the essay, should the focus be on problems in the community and what that robotics team is doing to solve them or is the focus somewhere else?

The focus should be on what your team has done to change culture and fulfill the mission of *FIRST*. This could be in the community, within FRC, or elsewhere. There's no single recipe that works. Your team needs to focus on your strengths and passions, especially in the areas where you've had the most impact.

How do you use the short answer summary questions versus the actual essay?

The Executive Summary questions are specific questions to be addressed by all teams. This creates the opportunity for you to provide more of your team's information. There are varying successful approaches, some teams overlap the information in both the questions and the summaries, some create more factual bullet points, others tell very short stories. Review [HOF previous winning Chairman's essays](#) to see how teams successfully handled the Executive Summaries.

In the essay, is it better to give shorter summaries of lots of different initiatives we have taken, or focus on a few key programs/aspects but explain them highly in depth, potentially not mentioning other initiatives?

Much like building a robot, it's always better to do three things at 10/10, instead of five at 6/10. With only 10,000 characters to use on the essay, it's important to limit your amount of topics to ensure you can provide enough depth for the judges. To truly convey impact you need to provide the story behind the headline. You can only do this effectively, especially if you've done many things, if you limit yourselves to your most impactful initiatives.

Is it better to keep the essay and presentation formal or to have a fun/unique approach?

This depends on your team's image, there are many examples of successful presentations using both professional and fun approaches.

- Some are playful, skit like presentations; others business like with powerpoints.
- Some are quick paced with a lot of information; others are slow, deliberate stories.
- Some presenters cannot pull-off a playful performance. Others are uncomfortable being formal. Whatever approach you take, ensure it is a good fit for your team and the presenters.
- Commit to your chosen approach and Practice! No matter which approach, sloppy execution is always ineffective.

One Answer for these 2 questions

- For the alumni...how "big" were your Chairman's teams (roughly)? Did everyone work on every aspect?
- How many team members worked on each of your Chairman's Awards?

For the essay, it varied year to year. Some years we had many students interested, others a few. 1-3 students usually took responsibility for writing the bulk of the essay, numerous students, alumni and mentors usually assisted in the editing process. During the editing process we would sit at a large table and take turns reading paragraphs, listening for awkward sections and making notes as we went. Then we would edit more and read aloud again. Then we would send the draft to some alumni distance mentoring, rewrite again. At the end, in order for students to be "Competition Ready" we required that every student read the essay and if they had any input we edited again.

For the Presentation, usually members of the presenting team wrote the bulk, then offered it up for edits.

It's important to be open to input and feedback to get the best results in the room.

Virtual Presentation

What sort of things should teams be considering as we move to online presentations?

Practice is the single greatest asset for a team in these online or in person presentations. The difference will be what you are practicing. Not only are you practicing your lines, how to work with any visuals, how to answer questions, but you should also be practicing how it works within the platform you will be using with the judges -- multiple times, from the locations you will be presenting and making sure each student and the representing mentor has a safe and reliable place to present from. Practice and a good location will reduce the stress of the situation.

How can teams this year take advantage of the different setups? What do you think presentations will look like and how can we expound on that?

The presentations will be virtual. One benefit, is that you don't have to all show up at the meetings at the same time to get practice in.

As we mentioned above. **Practice.** Practice the material and the technological aspects. Give the presentation to mentors and sponsors online in the same platform. Use simple visual aids with few points that will come across clearer on the small screen.

Video

Since this 2020 season doesn't require a video submission, what advice would you give teams in order to improve their chances at winning?

The video submission for the Chairman's Award was never a part of the judging, unless a team chose to include it in their presentation. Video submissions were used to showcase the team that earned the Chairman's Award at the event. The videos were reviewed to make sure that they did include the proper copyright information and nothing inappropriate, but were not a deciding factor in the decision.

But if you still have the resources to produce a team video of the team's impact for the year it can be useful for many reasons. Even if you don't use it in your submission, it can be used to highlight the team's experience and progress over the past year(s). It can also be shared with sponsors and shared on social media.

What was each panelist's favorite thing that their team did that they remember was talked about a lot in their chairman's submission?

1902: I loved talking about #*FIRST*LikeAGirl and the collaborative impact we made with other *FIRST* teams. I also think we took a unique approach by talking about the importance of social media, imagery, and branding which aren't traditionally seen as Chairman's topics.

1816: There was a lot of discussion on how to incorporate Core Values throughout the submission. #JoyofLife was more than just a value or social media hash-tag, it was the one that served as the primary "check-in" whenever the team came together to work on the many tasks associated with a competition season. If team members were not having fun, that was the signal to put work aside and talk! There was a lot more laughter, so much so that passersby would often stop and poke their heads into our team's workspaces to find out what was making so many teenagers and adults double-over laughing.

1114: My favourite was our team collaborating with Degrassi: The Next Generation to produce two episodes which featured a high school robotics team, That was definitely our best job at "Making it Loud". But in terms of overall impact our resources including the SimPhone App, which at the time was a revolutionary mobile resource for FRC teams, and our Kitbot on Steroids, which helped raise the bar for low to medium resource FRC teams across the world.

Miscellaneous

How do you go about reaching out to other teams for chairman's help and feedback?

Many members of the Chairman's Teams from the Hall of Fame often provide feedback to teams who request assistance. Reviewing essays and presentations. Traditionally, people may have first developed contacts at Regionals/Districts. You can email teams and request help. Many teams good at Chairman's often help other teams. Reach out to teams you think are doing a good job and see if they are willing to offer some feedback. You may also collaborate with a group of other teams working on the award who are interested in feedback also to read each other's essays, watch each other's digital presentations, share advice, etc. Visit FIRSTHallofFame.org for a full listing of *FIRST* Hall of Fame winning teams and how to contact them.

Do you have to have a well-performing robot to win Chairman's?

The Chairman's Award is judged separately from the robot. However the following clause does exist. *"While the Chairman's Award is about "more than robots", teams often leverage their robots to enhance their impact on the broader community. For this reason, it is expected teams in contention for the Chairman's Award will have built a robot appropriate to the game's challenges for the season. This does not require the team to have ranked at a certain level during the event but does require teams to put in more than just the minimal effort necessary to field a drivable robot."*

Being a new coach with a veteran team that puts a lot of time and energy into the "robot", how do you shift or build energy to get them interested in Chairman's?

- Outreach can be anything, not just a food bank or teaching a *FIRST* LEGO League class -- it is what you are passionate about. Creating a rookie team or helping a team that can use help with your strengths.
- Figure out who you are as a team, and focus on those strengths.
- As a team, identify the values you wish to celebrate as a team. Reward those values among the team members.
- Set reasonable goals. Give the team time to complete the essay and plan and practice the presentation.
- If you are a strong robot team, you can use those skills to help other teams. Flex your strengths! Curriculum, assisting/mentoring teams, workshops, videos and more
- Have a mentor committed to helping them and keeping them on track. These students need support and resources, same as the robot teams.
- Just the process of writing a chairman's essay is one method. Going through the process, even if not really competitive at the moment. Reading a question and realizing... oh we are doing this, and we can do this better. Oh and this question is asking this and we just started working on that. Doing it helps you to see what you are doing, what your strengths are and building on those strengths to be a better team. How are we doing right now, and what we can do to improve. The chairman's award is a measuring stick for how you are progressing and it can also help you focus on what you want to do better.

- Once goals are identified, then you think about the help you need for the team that might help to recruit for -- students and mentors who are more community engaged or can help spread the message in digital media.
- These are building blocks from one year to the next.
- Having the mentor in the room, will give you immediate feedback to see how you did and how you can improve.
- [Read the Chairman's Guidelines!](#) So you know what the Judges are looking for and are not surprised.
- Make it fun!

What recommendations do you have for a team who is very early on the path toward Chairman's Activities? Especially getting students engaged with outreach activities?

The best way to get students involved with outreach activities is to let them conceive of and design the activities. If the students feel ownership over the projects, they'll be more motivated to take part in them, than if they were created by the mentors without input from the students. Similarly, if only a small group of students are designing team initiatives, it can be more difficult to get buy-in from the entire team.

Coming from a team that won our first Chairman's in 2020- how do we maintain the momentum to win Chairman's again?

Chairman's can be a grind, especially since it almost feels like it requires a year long effort. It's important to keep the process fun and dynamic. You want to change things up and come up with new approaches and initiatives. However, you also need to be conscious of burnout. Just like with building a robot, if you try and do too much, you are likely to fail. So make sure to work within your resource level (e.g. number of students, amount of time available, etc.)

What advice would you give a newer team who may not quite have a robust community outreach resume, yet still wants to make the best Chairman's submission possible?

Start with what you have and document it as well as you can. You need to start from somewhere, and the present is as good of a time as any. The efforts you make as a newer team, will be invaluable as your team grows into the future.

What is the best way to get the most students involved with Chairman's on your team in order to maximize production when working on it?

The Chairman's Award itself invites "all team, all call." Find the opportunities to earn team buy-in, whether it's outreach events, all-team meetings, team-building activities, an all-team SWOT analysis, etc. Using collaborative platforms to share documents also invite anyone on the team, from any location, to contribute. It's well worth the time and energy to bring in as many team members as possible.

Do you feel you "win" Chairman's or "earn" Chairman's? Is that distinctive language important to judges? It is on our team.

This wording can definitely vary depending on internal team dynamics. I think the more important discussion is how teams treat the award when working towards earning it and after they do win/earn it. Treating the award like an honor that comes as an added benefit to hard work rather than an end goal and can be observed from the impact of your work.

Is the participation rates of teams going for Chairman's increasing, or decreasing, or staying steady?

The number of teams submitting has increased every year as we have more teams each year. We guess that for the 2021 season we will see a decrease as we have a decrease in the total number of teams for the 2021 season.

How do you think a Chairman's team is well organized?

The entire team can be involved in the chairman's efforts. Documentation should take place year around. Documenting each event, following up to see what kind of impact it had, photographs, letters of appreciation, blog posts on your website, social media posts - are just some of the things that can be involved in before build season.

Ideally, at least one dedicated mentor should be involved to make sure to support the students involved in the process, provide continuity over the years and troubleshoot.

Plan a timeline for when different parts of the Chairman's process will be done and decide ahead of time who will complete them. Just like your robot should have a timeline, your chairman's process should have a timeline so that it doesn't become an afterthought or get left to the last minute. Sit down with your documentation and decide what goes into your essay, what goes into your executive summary, and what goes into the presentation and outline everything. Make sure you have a plan for who will edit your essay (should be multiple people!)

How do you find the drive when you did things in Judges eyes they didn't see important in the past that you see happening in the future now?

Chairman's is a cumulative effort. It is the celebration of all your successes and disappointments. Many times teams learn so much from an effort that was not very successful, but it leads to something even better or maybe a stronger team. Tell your story, share your journey with the judges. Keeping building on that story.

The detail, specific definitions for 'starting teams' or 'hosting events' added last year can make the submission feel like the emphasis is on the record-keeping, and it seems legalistic. It can be one more thing to discourage submissions. Is the bar being raised beyond the reach of many teams who can't do all the documentation?

The purpose of the record-keeping was to make sure that teams didn't feel like they were competing against illegitimate submissions. It also provides a more holistic view to judges and can bring a sense of authenticity that can't be captured with large sum totals of hours or events. It is a process that can take place over many seasons for a team to be able to calculate numbers, but there should always be a source for every claim a team is making in their submission. Documentation can also take other forms if you aren't using numbers and the evidence forms added this year. For example, adding photos, testimonials, and impact letters can help make your efforts more authentic.

Some questions ask about the robot yet the chairman's award we present is usually not robot-focused, should presenters still understand specifics about the robot even if it's not mentioned in their essay/presentation?

Most judges do not ask, but some may still ask. Know what your team's robot strategy is, how your robot is doing, and what the team's experience at the event has been like. There will not be time to ask in-depth questions. If there is something you are not aware of about your robot, don't be afraid to say you are *not sure*. We always aimed to take breaks in preparing for the presentation to watch as many of our matches as possible.

As we are doing virtual presentations this year will there be a bit more leniency toward unprecedented connection issues? (i.e. technology hindrances on the day of the presentation that were never experiences prior during the practice)

Yes, judges will be understanding—in the same vein that sometimes students forget presentation lines. Remember that presentations are part of the scoring and the time is set regardless of issues. Suggest that teams practice using the technology and have all students prepared to present so it does not hinder on one person's connection.

Most judges are business professionals who have at some time experienced technical difficulties that can occur. That is more true having lived through the year 2020 than it has ever been. We have ALL learned that virtual meetings can have issues and therefore need to have a plan for what happens when they do. Judges will be understanding, but will still have the task of arriving at decisions. Teams may want to have a plan in place to recover in the event of technical difficulties. Example....If judges cannot see a video feed, but can hear audio feed, can you adequately tell your story without visual prompts. As the saying goes, "Hope for the best and prepare for the worst"

In some regionals, the same teams win year after year. Don't you think it is unfair for the international teams who travel for hours to the US? I mean if a team outside the US won't get the award and if most of the times they are the winners, why are there international participants

Some Regionals may have a strong showing of regulars at their events, it is not possible to always predict who will be attending a regional you select, but I have attended several US Regional's whereby International teams have earned the Chairman's Award. Here are just a few examples of international teams earning a Chairman's Award at a US Regional. Keep doing the work your team values, document your efforts, and work to communicate those efforts.

- Team 3478 - PrepaTec - LamBot, 2019 Utah Regional
- Team 4481 - Team Rembrandts, Palmetto 2018
- Team 3646 - INTEGRA BAHCESEHIR, 2017 Orange County Regional

What can judges say about teams who do experience technical difficulties unfortunately, will they be penalized for that? Thank you for your time.

For teams that may run into technical difficulties, we recommend that you have a plan in place for those instances. You have to assume that something could go wrong and know how your team will respond. Judges as a group do not penalize a team for situations they cannot control. That has a negative feel to it. Judges prefer to see the positives when a team finds their way through a difficult circumstance. How well a team performs during a stressful moment tells more about the team than the fact that they ran into technical difficulties. That being said, be prepared and practice, practice, practice.

FIRST National Advocacy Conference is referred to as NAC. Do judges know what this is or does this need to be explained?

You may not know the background of your specific Chairman's judges so it is always safe to spell the whole term out with the abbreviation in parenthesis. Then you can refer to the abbreviation later on in your essay. Make sure you reintroduce the full name if you're referencing it in a later paragraph to make it as easy as possible for judges.

I.e. Our team also participated in the *FIRST* National Advocacy Conference (NAC). We were one of 15 teams from Alaska to be represented at NAC.

Answer to 3 questions

- Our team has a several hundred page binder full of documentation, pictures, and information about our team; will there be a way to give it to the judges digitally?
- Will there be an opportunity to give judges a team outreach book or other documentation this year?

- We usually submit a "chairman's binder" and hand it to the judges after the interview. Can we submit an electronic version this year?

Teams will not be able to submit this documentation for the 2021 season due to the remote interviews but are encouraged to share relevant info during the interview and will be allowed to screen share if they wish. This information can be found on the [webpage](#) with the Chairman's Award Guidelines

Additionally, if you have a website and/or social media, it would be a great time to add your chairman's information to your website and document efforts on social media. If you presented workshops for FLL teams, provided PPE or organized a Food Drive, make sure you have something written up about that on your website and pictures on your social media accounts. The judges do their research, make it easy for them to find documentation of your efforts on your website and social media channels. Check out some of the past chairman's award winners for examples of how to showcase your efforts.

When we return to in person judging, I would still consider streamlining large binders. Several hundred pages is more than judges can get through. Is there a way to combine some of the information? Do you have a summary sheet in the front? That can help you to control the message you want the judges to walk away with.

Does winning State Championships in 2020, and not being able to go to Worlds, have any bearing on our Chairman's standing this season?

It will not have any bearing, because there was no *FIRST* 2020 World Championship.

Chairman's Executive Summary #2 wording clarification: What does "its" refer to, our community's opportunities or our team's opportunities?

***Newly revised executive summary question.**

Describe your community along with how your team addresses its unique opportunities and circumstances.

The question is asking how your team addresses your community's unique opportunities and circumstances. This could also apply to the opportunities your team has within your community.

Is there a rubric for the Chairman's Award?

- Each team that comes in is unique, the submission is the information - equitable view, a rubric can not capture the differences.
- **The practice, good flow and connecting with the judges**
- Recommend you make a checklist for your goals in the experience.

Helpful Links

- [Chairman's Award Submission information](#): detailed information about the current submission process and requirements
- [Mission, Vision and Core Values of FIRST](#)
- [Chairman's Award Resources](#): links to the Chairman's Chat video and winning essays dating back to 2016
- [Chairman's Documentation Form](#)
- [Chairman's Award Definitions](#)
- [Links to past Hall of Fame team submission materials available](#)
- [FIRST Hall of Fame](#): helpful blog articles and team information and links to websites.

For questions regarding specific team questions, please contact
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