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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2020 Western Idaho Science Fair adds eCYBERMISSION Showcase

BOISE, Idaho (Feb. 21, 2020) — Students from throughout the region will convene at Boise State University March 6 for the fourth annual Western Idaho Science and Engineering Fair and the first annual Western Idaho eCYBERMISSION Showcase.

Presented by the Idaho STEM Action Center in partnership with Micron, the science fair features 121 projects by 130 high school students, including 112 individuals and nine teams, in five categories: Animal, biomedical, and microbiological sciences; behavioral and social sciences; earth, environmental, and plant sciences; physical sciences; and engineering, math, and computer science.

Students will present their projects to a panel of judges, with the Best of Fair winners earning an all-expense-paid trip to Anaheim, Calif., to compete in the Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair May 10-15.

The Western Idaho Science and Engineering Fair is one of three such regional events the STEM Action Center hosts statewide each spring.

The regional eCYBERMISSION showcase — part of a nationwide, Web-based STEM competition for students in grades six through nine — features four projects by 16 middle school and junior high school students. The teams were challenged to explore how science, technology, engineering, and math apply to their world while working as a team to solve problems in their communities.

The STEM Action Center partnered with the U.S. Army Educational Outreach Program to bring the popular competition to Idaho, with regional showcases also planned for Western Idaho and North Idaho. National finalists earn an all-expenses-paid trip to compete at the national judging and education event June 4-19 in Washington, D.C.

The Western Idaho science fair and eCYBERMISSION showcase will be held simultaneously in the Simplot Ballroom at BSU's Student Union Building at 1700 University Dr. in Boise. The events are open to the public from 3-6 p.m. with an awards ceremony and keynote speech by Micron co-founder Ward Parkinson scheduled for 5-6 p.m. Admission is free.

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According to STEM Action Center executive director Dr. Angela Hemingway, competitions like these are important to the state's future, offering students opportunities to engage in original research projects aligned with their interests and meet and learn with other motivated students in their area.

“The quality of the research presented at Idaho STEM competitions is impressive and the work our students are doing is competitive at the international level,” Dr. Hemingway said. “The technical skills gained from participating in these events, as well as the ability to communicate results, think deeply and critically about issues, and solve real-world problems, will serve our students well as they transition into the workforce.”

In addition to facilitating critical and creative thinking, problem solving, innovation, and collaboration, she said STEM skills are needed for 17 of Idaho's 20 fastest growing jobs and that STEM jobs pay more than twice as much as non-STEM jobs.

“The state anticipates 20 percent job growth in STEM careers — including health care, computing, engineering, and advanced manufacturing — by 2026,” Dr. Hemingway said. “Currently there are nearly 86,000 STEM workers statewide, and the Idaho Department of Labor predicts we may have 105,000 STEM jobs by 2026 — a 19,000-job increase in just six years from now. It is critical we build the STEM talent pipeline now so Idahoans have the knowledge and skills required to fill these high-demand STEM jobs now and in the future.”

She said these jobs would represent about \$7 billion in personal income and about \$352 million in tax revenue if Idaho's workforce is poised to fill them.

About the Idaho STEM Action Center

The Idaho STEM Action Center was created in 2015 because Idaho citizens are not entering the STEM pipeline fast enough to meet current and future Idaho workforce needs. Its goals are to increase access to STEM opportunities, align education and workforce needs, and amplify awareness of STEM throughout Idaho. The organization is working with industry, government, educators, and students to develop new resources and support high-quality professional-development opportunities to foster a STEM-educated workforce that ensures Idaho's continued economic prosperity.

Visit STEM.Idaho.gov for more information, and visit <https://STEM.idaho.gov/support-us/foundation> to make a tax-deductible donation to the Idaho STEM Action Center Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, to enhance the investment the state has made in Idaho's STEM community. Contributions provide greater access to STEM camps for children, student competitions, and many other life-shaping programs.

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