

INAUGURAL SCIENCE OLYMPIAD ALUMNI RESEARCH (SOAR) GRANT RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED

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16 Aug, 2023, 10:07 ET

Two Chicago-Area Scientists Receive \$25,000

OAKBROOK TERRACE, Ill., Aug. 16, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- The Science Olympiad USA Foundation announced the recipients of the inaugural Science Olympiad Alumni Research (SOAR) Grants, Dr. Kathryn Jackson-Jones of Northwestern University and Omar Kazi of the University of Chicago.

In this first year of giving, two \$25,000 SOAR Grants were awarded, one in each category of medical research impacting human health and energy/climate research impacting a safer, greener world – topics patterned after the popular Science Olympiad events Disease Detectives and Dynamic Planet. The application was open to students at any of 51 existing campuses with a Science Olympiad Alumni Chapter. "We are thrilled to provide support to these incredible early-career researchers who will undoubtedly make an impact on the world," said Jenny Kopach, President of the Science Olympiad USA Foundation.

The medical award went to Dr. Kathryn Jackson-Jones, a postdoctoral research scholar at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. "This funding will help me explore the interactions between HIV and human proteins that allow the virus to manipulate the immune system to evade detection," she said. Originally hailing from the UK, Dr. Jackson-Jones' experience with Science Olympiad started with the Northwestern University Science Olympiad Alumni Club, where she serves on the Executive Board and will run the Disease Detectives event for the 2024 NU Science Olympiad Invitational Tournament.

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Omar Kazi, a Molecular Engineering PhD student at the University of Chicago, received the energy award. He will use the grant to support research around interfacial solar steam generation (ISSG), a process that uses porous photothermal materials to convert sunlight into heat. Omar's early days of competition on Science Olympiad teams had a lasting impact: "Science Olympiad was a major catalyst in driving me towards a career in STEM, so it's exciting and rewarding to come full circle with this grant," he said. Omar now volunteers as a Science Olympiad Event Supervisor at regional and state levels in Illinois and New York and is an active member of the University of Chicago Science Olympiad Alumni Club, engaging K-12 underserved youth with interactive STEM activities like Science on the South Side.

The Science Olympiad USA Foundation is a 509a3 nonprofit organization formed in 2020, dedicated to carrying out the charitable, educational and scientific purposes of Science Olympiad, Inc., a 501c3 nonprofit formed in 1984. For more information see <https://www.soinc.org/usafoundation>

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