| Home | About URC | Requirements & Guidelines | Team Info | URC News | Photos | Videos | Resources | Contact |

Home >

COVID-19

** Statement Regarding Cancellation of URC2021 Finals - March 25, 2021 **

This year and every year, the University Rover Challenge aims to provide the best possible educational experience to students, while ensuring the health, safety, and wellbeing of everyone involved. While we are encouraged by the current COVID-19 public health metrics and increase in global vaccine distribution, conditions are not at a point that permit large-scale events requiring travel of geographically dispersed groups. Unfortunately, due to the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the URC2021 Finals have been cancelled.

We are currently assessing the feasibility of a virtual competition in lieu of the URC2021 Finals and will communicate details with teams soon. Results from the System Acceptance Review will also be announced in the coming days.

The URC judges and staff admire the perseverance of teams who have found ways to adapt to conditions over the past year and have worked hard to be prepared for URC2021. We have been watching the conditions closely in the hopes that an in-person Finals would be feasible. Much to our disappointment, we will have to wait for the URC2022 Finals to see teams and their rovers in person.

** Update - February 6, 2021 **

At this time in early 2021 the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the majority of URC teams. The foremost priority for URC remains the health, safety, and wellbeing of our teams. Teams are urged to follow all applicable health and safety guidelines, and not take unnecessary risks if you are working on your rover.

System Acceptance Review: The System Acceptance Review (SAR) will take place as planned. Regardless of the fate of the URC2021 Finals, the SAR is an invaluable part of URC's educational process. Teams will be given additional guidance regarding the allowable use of resources from the URC2020 process, to include test data and videos recorded last year.

URC2021 Finals: We anticipate making a decision regarding the URC2021 Finals in March, 2021 (after the SAR deadline). Due to the highly dynamic nature of this pandemic it is difficult to predict what the conditions will allow in June. Please understand that planning factors can, and will, change.

** Original Post (Still Relevant!) **

URC2021 is being planned and will occur in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic. At the time that the rules were published it is uncertain what the state of the pandemic will be in June, 2021 for the URC2021 Finals. **As such, it is possible that the URC2021 Finals may need to be modified, or even cancelled, based on conditions at that time.** Please continue to monitor the URC website for updates.

Throughout the academic year teams are also strongly advised to follow the health and safety guidelines of their universities, local communities, and relevant public health officials (to include the World Health Organization (WHO) and United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)).

Please note that the Mars Desert Research Station (MDRS) COVID-19 response plan currently allows no one on site but crews and mission support personnel. It will be updated in early 2021 to cover the URC2021 Finals.

How can teams better prepare for this uncertainty?

- Work with your university to develop a safe plan for your team to work. The health and safety or your team should be your top priority! Do not access facilities when not allowed, and do not "work around the rules" to hold in-person meetings off-campus that would otherwise be prohibited by your university!

- Start your planning early, and plan for the unexpected! Many universities are beginning the academic year in-person, but are being forced to transition early to remote instruction. Ensure that your planning includes schedule margins and contingency plans whenever possible. The Preliminary Design Review (PDR) and System Acceptance Review (SAR) will each require teams to address how COVID-19 related risk has been factored in to project plans.

- Cross-train your team members whenever possible! Do not rely on a single person to become a single point of failure for your project. This is always sound advice, but is especially true in a time where health risks are increased.

- Be prepared for potential modifications to the format of the URC2021 Finals, which may include a reduced number of travel team members, or restrictions to how teams operate during competition missions.
    - Design for ease of assembly, disassembly, and maintenance;
    - Design a thoughtful command and control station that can easily be transported, set up, and operated;
    - Cross-train team members for both maintenance and operations;
    - Test early, and test often!

- **The URC2021 Rules and Q&A have been kept the same from 2020!** (With the exception of dates and a statement regarding COVID-19.) This was a deliberate decision intended to help teams given the uncertainty of this year's competition. Use this to your advantage!

Comments

The University Rover Challenge (URC) is a project of **The Mars Society** , an international non-profit humans to Mars organization.