

SkillsUSA Official NLSC 2021 Video Announcement – Transcript

Link to video: <https://youtu.be/lyWKDV3c098>

Chelle Travis: SkillsUSA Executive Director

Sam Bottum: SkillsUSA Board President; Chief Marketing Officer, Snap-on Incorporated

CHELLE:

Hello, SkillsUSA Family. I'm Chelle Travis, SkillsUSA's executive director, and I'm joined by Sam Bottum, representing one of our most committed partners: Snap-on. Sam is also the president of SkillsUSA's board of directors.

SAM:

Hello, SkillsUSA Nation. I'm Sam Bottum, chief marketing officer of Snap-on Incorporated, and as Chelle mentioned, I'm honored to serve as SkillsUSA's board president. Given this difficult period in our nation's history, and on behalf of the entire SkillsUSA board, it's important that I join Chelle in this crucial announcement for SkillsUSA members, partners and stakeholders across the country.

CHELLE:

We are here to share with you SkillsUSA's decision on the status of our 2021 National Leadership and Skills Conference. We want to share not only that decision, but the reasoning behind it. We also want to give you as clear a picture as we can of what to expect from this year's national event, with the understanding that more specific details will be shared in the days ahead as they're finalized.

With that in mind, SkillsUSA's 2021 National Leadership and Skills Conference and SkillsUSA Championships will be held virtually, with localized hands-on elements for select competitions.

While I know this news will be met with initial disappointment, I want to assure all of you that we WILL be hosting an engaging and inspiring event you can all be proud of, and that event WILL include all of our SkillsUSA Championships competitions, as well as SkillsUSA TECHSPO and other events associated with our national conference.

Although the medals our competitors receive may not be presented in person this year, those bronze, silver and gold medallions will be just as valuable and just as respected by industry as they've always been. They'll also be just as likely to lead students to life-changing educational and career opportunities.

Before I offer more details on the 2021 event, however, I'd like to explain the factors that led to our decision. Number one, as always, is the health and safety of our members.

With so much still unclear as to when large face-to-face gatherings will be deemed safe and when the effects of the virus will finally subside, we could not in good conscience move forward with the planning of an in-person event bringing thousands of our members and stakeholders together from across the country.

State travel restrictions have also played a large role in our decision.

In a survey conducted in October, 23 SkillsUSA state associations revealed that imposed travel restrictions in their states would prevent them from attending the national conference. With the increase of COVID cases nationwide, more states have since been added to that list. Complicating the situation further are state budgetary restrictions that also affect the ability to travel, even where travel restrictions are not in place.

If state delegations are unable to travel, they cannot participate in a national in-person event, and our national conference cannot function without that participation.

The lack of our ability to adequately prepare for the event as a national staff has also been an issue.

2021 was scheduled to be our first year in Atlanta. Because of this, it was more important than ever that our staff make multiple visits to the event sites months ahead of time to prepare competition and meeting space, review safety procedures, identify event locations and more. Our staff has not been able to visit Atlanta since last February, and the same holds true for our state directors. At this time, it's unclear when those visits will be able to occur, and without that in-person planning, we cannot successfully hold an in-person event.

Finally, our partners are facing similar issues with travel restrictions and budgetary obstacles, and many have expressed concern that they will be unable to travel and participate in an in-person event in 2021.

As this hopefully makes clear, an in-person national conference in 2021, as much as we all want it, is simply not a realistic option for SkillsUSA. Making our decision now will enable us and our state associations to focus on what IS possible, and to make those events as empowering, engaging and inspiring as we can.

Once again, we will tap into our resilience as SkillsUSA members as we show the nation that not even a pandemic can keep us from accomplishing SkillsUSA's mission: to empower our members to become world-class workers, leaders and responsible American citizens.

We've learned much over the last 8 months, and we are working hard to prepare a national event and competitive experience that's worthy of our long tradition. We will

be working with a company specializing in virtual events to create a unique, user-friendly and option-rich environment for all our members.

In fact, this virtual event may provide you with even MORE opportunities to make connections with future employers, mentors and friends. This will not be just another Zoom conference. It will be an EVENT. An event you'll want to be part of. We'll have more specific details for you very soon.

As for the SkillsUSA Championships, the guidelines have been revised for each competition to reflect the virtual nature of the event. All competitions will be judged — and many will be conducted — virtually.

However, some will require localized areas where hands-on skills will be performed by competitors and overseen by an instructor and a proctor to ensure safety, quality and integrity in all competitions. These hands-on elements will also be documented, and that documentation will be shared with national judges as part of the virtual judging process. Details are still being finalized, but rest assured: The skills of our competitors WILL be put to the test once again this year as they're judged against tough national standards. We WILL name national bronze, silver and gold medalists, and our partners — as they have always done — will be eager to meet and hire the best career and technical education students in the nation.

Sam can add to that from a partner's perspective.

SAM:

Thanks, Chelle. Despite the challenges of this pandemic for all of us, I want all of you to know that business and industry still needs your skills, now and for decades to come. We need you if we are going to be successful as organizations and as a society, engaging all citizens in this national calling for these jobs offering economic opportunity and prosperity, dignity and respect, and that are vital to our country's future. For those reasons and for many others, we will continue to stand by SkillsUSA and support you completely. Your personal, workplace and technical skills grounded in academics are in fact more valuable than ever. You are the people we want to hire. Business and industry partners recognize SkillsUSA as a vital solution to the skills gap. We must upskill our nation. That hasn't changed, and it is not going to change.

My fellow business and industry partners and I are as committed as ever to SkillsUSA, including to this national conference. Like many companies, Snap-on has been a proud supporter of SkillsUSA for decades, and this year, Snap-on has significantly increased our support of SkillsUSA, financially and otherwise, to help better serve you.

We are not alone. SkillsUSA partners are standing by you, playing a vital role in this conference and supporting you and your teachers more than ever. Carhartt, Toyota, Lowe's, 3M, and many others. So, we will do our part for you. And I encourage each

of you to tap into that resilience that Chelle spoke of earlier, get excited, and get ready to bring your absolute best to the competitions this year. When you make it to the national level, you will be tested and challenged, and we will be watching it all and eager to celebrate with you. SkillsUSA partners will be there. We hope you will be there, too.

CHELLE:

Thanks, Sam. SkillsUSA is so thankful for the continued support of Snap-on and all of our partners who continue to stand with us. We are most thankful for you, our members. We are so proud of you for how you've dealt with this crisis and kept your skills sharp and ready. We are committed to providing a national conference that YOU can be proud of. In the meantime, we'll also be working to support your states to help them successfully plan and run their own events.

We've all had to leap a lot of hurdles this year, and there are still a few more to come. But that finish line is getting closer, and we'll cross it together as SkillsUSA, one united and empowered organization. Look for many more details and dates in the days and weeks ahead. Until then, stay safe, stay healthy and stay skilled.