

**ECONOMIC CHALLENGES, TECHNOLOGY,
AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTS
2008-2012**

Under the leadership of Robert Brezina, President of USAD, and Dr. Les Martisko, Chief Executive Officer, USAD was able to retain and strengthen its program despite difficult economic times. An increasing number of academic organizations were competing for increasingly fewer funds provided by school systems for co-curricular and extracurricular academic activities. Technology proved to be an answer by offering more on-line opportunities in addition to continuing existing on-site competitions.



CEO Dr. Les Martisko, President Robert Brezina, and CFO Dr. Sally Zoll prepare for a Board meeting.

Through the efforts of Board Member David Mikkalson and Enlyght Software, virtual competitions, in which students competed in eight of ten events, offered the opportunity for more schools to participate at the National



Board Member David Mikkalson, corporate representative of Enlyght Software, is at work during the 2011 Nationals in Charlotte, NC.

level. Enlyght Software provided USAD with software and training to make these online events possible. Due to the success of the “small school” competition in 2006 (school enrollment of less than 650), the “medium school” competition (school enrollment from 650 to 1300) was added in 2008, and the “large school” competition (enrollment of more than 1300 students) was added in 2010. In 2012, 16 states participated in the small school category, 14 in the medium school category, and 8 in the large school category. A virtual competition has also been offered to international schools.

The Pentathlon, a national program started in 2010 and designed for middle school students to encourage their participation later in the high school Decathlon program, is also offered as a virtual competition opportunity. The Pentathlon theme is parallel to the Academic Decathlon ® theme, and students complete an essay for Language and Literature and take four objective tests in Mathematics, Music, Science, and Social Studies. Six states currently participate in this competition.

Technology has also played a role in the on-site national competition. Since 2008, students have completed the Essay portion of the Decathlon online two weeks prior to the competition, thus handling scoring in a more efficient and equitable manner. In an effort to free up time in team schedules during the on-site competition, the mathematics test was administered online in 2010, and the art test was administered online in 2011 and 2012, two weeks prior to the national competition.

USAD has sought to provide additional materials for students that are more helpful and appealing. In order to level the playing field, the curriculum is now an inclusive one with embedded research. At the same time, the cost of materials has decreased, particularly since the 2010-11 school year when all materials were made available through electronic download.

The competition is constantly being re-visited and changes are being made to reflect the needs of the students. While the Speech Showcase was a popular event for many years at the national competition, in 2012, three students were instead invited to give their speech presentations at the Awards Banquet for all attendees to

enjoy. Both the Super Quiz™ and Awards Banquet were streamed live through the efforts of recently acquired corporate sponsor, General Communication Inc. (GCI).

To increase the level of excitement at the competition, the Super Quiz™ is undergoing changes for 2012-13. Super Quiz™ will be in the form of an oral relay only, and questions will be taken from six subject areas including art, economics, language and literature, music, science and social science. Six thousand points can potentially be added toward overall team totals.



The Awards Banquet in Albuquerque, NM in April 2012 was a festive occasion!

Other accomplishments during Robert Brezina's presidency should be noted. For instance, an Orientation Manual with accompanying documents was made available to new Board members in order to make the transition to the Board a



Student Advisory Board Members, Julian, Brita, and Ashley, provide valuable feedback to Board members and State Directors at a Joint Meeting in Sacramento July 2011.

smoother one. More substantial efforts were made to recruit Board members who would create a more diverse governing body, both geographically and professionally. There has been an ongoing discussion to generate funding in order to create additional scholarship opportunities for Decathletes. Ever mindful of the importance of taking into account the opinions of student competitors, USAD invited three former

Decathletes to form a Student Advisory Board. These exceptional students offered meaningful suggestions at a special Joint Board-State Directors meeting held in July 2011.

With the passing of individuals who played a significant role in USAD's history, the Board approved procedures in 2011 to memorialize those who gave much to the organization. Board Members Dr. Alfonso Perez, Dr. Alex Aloia, and B. Franklin Reinauer II, and State Director Norman Katz were honored for their significant contributions at national competition awards banquets. The Board also created the USAD Lifetime Service Award to honor living individuals who make significant lasting contributions to the organization at the national level. Suzanne Eisler Roberts, a founding member of USAD, was named as the first recipient in April 2012 for her long-term and extraordinary service to the USAD program as evidenced, in part, through her support of the Kristin Caperton Scholarship Award.



Board Secretary Franklin Wurtzel, Esq. presents the B. Franklin Reinauer II Economics Prize to Sean Wejbe from California.



Suzanne Roberts, the first recipient of the USAD Lifetime Service Award, presents the Kristin Caperton Award to Colby Wolfe of Georgia accompanied by his coaches, Lisa and Ian Beck.

While the USAD State Directors continue to play a significant role in the USAD program, differences of opinion amongst the directors have posed substantive challenges for the USAD-SD organization. However, their leadership is working to re-create a cohesive, unified group to continue their important work within the organization.

Finally, as Robert Brezina's presidency comes to an end, and Joseph Jones assumes leadership responsibilities as

President of USAD in 2012, the Board has agreed to establish a strategic relationship with one of its competitors, DemiDec. Negotiations are in progress with DemiDec's founder, former Decathlete Daniel Berdichevsky, to seek assistance with

the continuation of state expansion, with the curriculum, and with the development of materials.

In conclusion, despite a negative economic climate from 2008 through 2012, United States Academic Decathlon's finances remain stable. This is due to the watchful eye of USAD's CFO, the effectiveness and vision of the leadership team, the competence and efficiency of the Staff in day-to-day operations, the hard work of the State Directors, and the willingness of Board Members to go above and beyond in ensuring that all policies are made in the best interest of student Decathletes.



Pictured are Les Martisko, CEO, and Joseph Jones, as Joe transitions from President-elect to President of USAD May 1, 2012.