

December 6, 2021

USAD Opportunities and Challenges

2012-2021

During the years from 2012 through 2021, the USAD organization faced a variety of new opportunities and challenges. Several noteworthy areas are discussed in this USAD History addendum.

International Competition

By the end of 2012, Joseph Jones, the President of the USAD Board of Directors, encouraged forward thinking into the 21st century and suggested that USAD could be successful world-wide. Mr. Jones also was determined to improve products, appeal to corporate sponsors, and strengthen USAD's financial position.

However, marketing efforts would need to wait until exploring an international component of USAD's competition was initiated.

By April 2013, Daniel Berdichevsky (founder of both the DemiDec and World Scholar's Cup organizations) was given a contract to serve as a consultant and provide a monthly report on his activities. An effort was made to recruit new schools and corporate partners and meet with international schools.

It was at this time that the Board needed to determine if the organization should be going international. What was the financial viability of international expansion? Could USAD expand domestic and international competition at the same time? The board



Former Presidents, Dr. Art Stunard, Bob Brezina, Frank Wurtzel, Joe Jones, and Jack Peterson share their time, treasure, and talent with the USAD program.



Bob Brezina and Dave Mikkalson enjoy the banquet in Honolulu in 2014.

determined that it would hold a pilot in 2014 in Hawaii, with limitations, to give Board members a sense of what was involved. There was extensive discussion among Board members about the commitment to international competition. How does international competition fit with the Decathlon mission? How can USAD encourage decathletes to become global citizens? What issues will arise that USAD

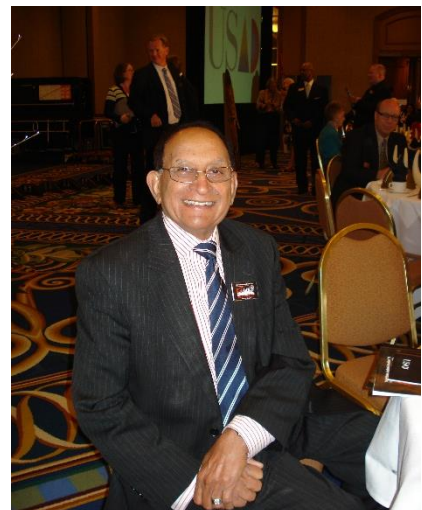
will need to contend with? Before becoming involved with international competition, it needed to tell an updated organizational story. What did the face of USAD look like?

The Board discussed if it should be placing greater emphasis on in-depth analysis of informational, scientific and technical text. Should it integrate math, engineering and technology and use assessments that engage students in scientific inquiry and engineering design? Does it need to emphasize more collaborative learning, encouraging students to apply knowledge to real world situations? Was this a program that still has value for 21st century learners utilizing problem solving and application of knowledge and is project-based and addressing global issues? Daniel Berdichevsky determined that he could not start public relations work for USAD until it clearly knew who it was currently and what it wanted to become. It was at this point that the Board was introduced to Dr. K. Habib Khan who had worked within the field of international education. A central question the organization faced was would it keep its current model in place or establish a separate international program?

In 2014, the Board created an International Committee to determine if it was desirable to expand internationally, and USAD Administration contacted Dr. Khan of the

International Academy for Social Development. Mr. Berdichevsky continued to work on USAD messaging, logos, taglines, an alumni council, and a new website. USAD needed to communicate that it had an international pilot. Mr. Berdichevsky's contract expired in 2014 and was not renewed, but the Board continued to work on an increase in curriculum materials, growth in the states, and expansion into states not participating. All of this required strengthening communication. There was also a change of leadership. Nadine Kujawa served as President from 2014 to 2015, and then David Mikkalson began his service as President from 2015 to the present.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by Dr. Kujawa, Dr. Martisko, and Dr. Khan between the International Academy for Social Development (IASD) and USAD on July 23, 2014, and adopted on September 10-11, 2014. The document specified that ten to twenty International Champions would be invited to the 2015 National Finals. USAD would only invite state champions to participate in National Finals competition, and Wild Card teams would be discontinued. An Ad Hoc Committee



Dr. Habib Khan signed an MOU in 2014 with USAD to promote international expansion.

studied potential growth and expansion and the MOU was approved to promote international expansion which was desirable from a programmatic and revenue perspective. It was thought that involving students from throughout the globe would strengthen USAD. Dr. Khan assured the Board that international students would be in compliance with the ABC system of assigning students to competition categories, and board members felt that the sale of materials would provide greater financial stability.

Some board members generally thought that USAD could grow internationally as well as in the United States, and US students would have the opportunity to compete with international counterparts. It was understood that the Executive Director and President would be informed of international activities through quarterly reports. An evergreen term of five years would be extended by an additional year at the conclusion of each twelve-month period. IASD would keep 100 per cent of profit for the first year, 90 percent for the second year, 80 percent for the third year, 70 per cent for the fourth year, 60 percent for the fifth year, and 50 percent for the sixth year. The MOU could be terminated by either party without cause if given 180 days written notice. Dr. Khan indicated that International competition would be separate and independent, marketing the curriculum to high schools in foreign countries. This policy was adopted in September 2014. By January 2015, China had 45 teams competing in-country.

Also, in 2018, the International Competition was extended two years through the signing of an MOU subject to negotiation, and the Board was interested in creating a design for broader international competition. The Board suggested that research on what other international competitions do be completed, and that we needed students from countries in addition to China to participate. It was also important to promote engagement with international students.



A team from China celebrates at the 2018 Nationals in Frisco, Texas with mascots at the welcome ceremony.

US Program Improvements and Growth

There were changes in the traditional U.S. competition, including inviting individuals to compete at Nationals and online, changing the format of the Super Quiz to make it a more exciting event, and presenting top award-winning speeches at the Nationals banquet.



Super Quiz enjoys a different format, providing for increased engagement.

Corporate sponsor Enlyght worked with

Pentathlon to broaden participation and allow participation of individuals in non-participating schools and home-schooled students. The South-Central Service Co-op in Minnesota assisted USAD by providing two contracted employees to work with finance and customer service. Student involvement was encouraged through technological changes and participation in surveys, including determination of the Most Valuable Team member. By 2012-13, wild card invitations were given to second teams from the member states and placed in a separate division based on scores of the seven subject areas assessed by objective tests. The Decathlon Board moved from a focus on operations to a governing/fundraising orientation.

In January 2015, the board proposed improvements regarding communication including a revision of the website, expansion of social media, and program announcements.

By September 2015, Jerry Helgeson coordinated Pentathlon, and he projected that there would be ten teams from the United States and seven to ten international teams.

Ultimately, in 2016, twenty schools registered bringing in an income of \$45,500 with medals and trophies its biggest expense. Tragically, Mr. Helgeson passed away in 2016, and USAD staff member Amy (Magnuson) Dosch took on many of the responsibilities of the Pentathlon competition, including working with Board member and attorney Frank Wurtzel, to register a Pentathlon trademark.



Presidents of the State Directors' Association Dr. Cary Sell of Georgia and Jerry Helgeson of Idaho contribute significantly to USAD.



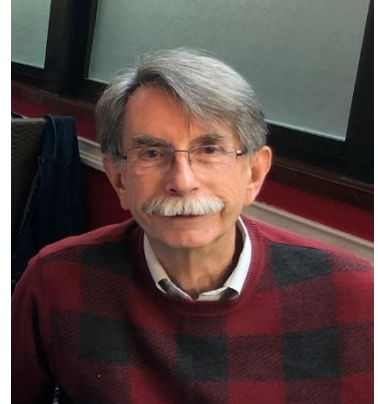
Terry McKiernan, Curriculum, Daniele Grigsby, Testing, Amy (Magnuson) Dosch, Finance, and CEO Dr. Les Martisko work tirelessly on the Administrative team to provide for a smoothly run program.

During 2017 Staff worked on improving materials including Resource Guides, Student Exercise Books, Notebook Dividers, Team Study Guides, and testing for scrimmages. Dr. James Augustin served as a measurement consultant using his expertise to improve the technical aspects of the objective tests used during Nationals competition. Earlier he had encouraged more development of higher-order thinking skills test content. He also reviewed content of curriculum materials to determine their ability to support sufficient numbers of test items at higher depth-of-knowledge levels during a transition from Bloom's taxonomy to Norman Webb's depth-of-knowledge levels.

At this same time, State Directors encouraged reinstating Wild Card teams to the Decathlon competition from different states instead of inviting individuals. They felt that

more students would be able to compete nationally and would provide opportunities to meet

students from around the world. Some board members felt that Decathlon was a team competition but would benefit individuals without a team affiliation. By 2018, a Division IV was created that would mirror all other divisions, but teams in this division would not be eligible for the Peterson Award. The same held true for international teams. Additionally, students in Division IV would only earn individual medals. All students were required to stay at the competition hotel. State Directors were given monetary incentives to increase the number of teams in their states.



Dr. Jim Augustin has contributed many years of experience in the field of educational testing and measurement to improve the quality of the program and ensure that the competition is a fair one.

By January 2019, Dr. Augustin discussed adjustments to testing that yielded a similar distribution of medals awarded across subject areas to strengthen the competition. He also led an ad hoc committee that specified that the Chinese schools participating in Decathlon competition follow proper enrollment requirements as well as grade-point requirements for the purpose of A, B, and C classification in order to ensure fair competition. The Board resolved that international teams needed to provide a clearly written document to describe sound, acceptable methods to assign international teams to A, B, C classifications, and that this document should be of sufficiently high measurement quality and placed on the USAD website.

Additional work was completed in 2019 with the Board discussing ways to support coaches, providing incentives to State Directors, helping with funding, and promoting a level playing field that moved USAD firmly into the 21st century. The Board's January 2020 meeting was held in Orlando, Florida. Little did Board members know that this would be their last face-to-face meeting for quite some time. The Board continued its work discussing



State Directors and staff gather together with President Mikkalson in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 2021 for the State Directors Summer meeting to celebrate another year of hard work.

the increase in teams for Pentathlon, hoping that this would expand the Decathlon program and reach out to Alumni to recruit teams and make financial contributions. A new system was approved for assigning student competitors to academic categories, with Honors students earning a 3.80-4.0 GPA, Scholastic students earning 3.20-3.799 GPA, and Varsity students earning a 3.199 or lower GPA. Discussion included changes in speech competition where students could record their speeches which would decrease the need for volunteers, and adding impromptu speeches at the end of

Interview to eliminate the need for breakout areas and encourage consistency of judging performance.

USAD During the COVID 19 Pandemic

The year 2020 proved to be a critical turning point for USAD team competition. CDC guidelines and the safety of decathletes were paramount in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. On February 3, it was decided that teams from China could compete in on-line competition only. By February 17, USAD decided to invite individuals and third teams according to the rules for Division IV teams. By March 13, the USAD in-person National Competition in Anchorage was canceled, but USAD would still offer the on-line competition. A difficult decision was made on April 6, 2020 when all National Competitions for USAD

and USAP for teams and individuals for 2019-20 were canceled.



USAD Board members, under the leadership and generosity of Suzanne Roberts, congratulate Alex Welshons of Minnesota as recipient of the Caperton Award accompanied by his coach and parents.

Although there was a suspension of National Competition in 2020, the Board and Administration continued its work through Zoom meetings. Committees worked on the following topics: Nationals, Growth, and, especially, International Competition. The Board decided to commit to holding the 2021 Competition

virtually, with trophies and medals shipped

to winning participants. The Caperton Inspiration Awards, with a record number of nominees, were presented to the two winning students at their local schools instead of at a National Banquet, and sponsor Suzanne Roberts did her best to make all the nominees feel very special.



The team from Granada Hills Charter High School, California wins the virtual competition in 2021.

The COVID-19 situation in schools had not improved by September 2021, and the Board voted unanimously to hold the 2022 Competition for both Decathlon and Pentathlon virtually for the health and safety of all student participants, based on the latest CDC and state COVID-19 restrictions, regulations, and guidelines.



The team from Mount Michael Benedictine School, Nebraska, takes precautions by wearing their masks in a photo for the 2021 Virtual Nationals.



Frank Wurtzel and Suzanne Roberts join Jack Peterson in being honored as recipients of the Lifetime Service Award.

Staff members continued to develop the curriculum in which materials would only be provided in electronic format, and they would also work on improving testing for future competitions. Mr. Jack Peterson, as chair of the Governance Committee, did considerable work to review the By-Laws and make necessary changes. Secretary Paxton, Dr. Talbott and staff developed a Policy Manual and Administrative Procedures

Manual. Board members would now have access to policies which were developed for the good of the students and documents created by Administration to ensure that the program would continue to run smoothly. Staff members were honored for their willingness to think out of the box to ensure the success of the USAD program. State Directors, Administration, Board Members, Corporate Sponsors, and Leadership worked tirelessly to ensure that we would emerge from the Pandemic with a program that would have an even greater impact on our Decathletes and Pentathletes. Special praise was given to Mr. Frank Wurtzel (2018), Dr. Art Stunard (2019) and Mr. Jack Peterson (2022) when the Board voted unanimously to present each of them with the Lifetime Service Award for their many years of dedicated service and leadership.

It is quite clear that without all of the afore-mentioned individuals working together, USAD may not have survived the Pandemic. It is fortunate that these many talented and caring people share the goal of working hand-in-hand to provide the best possible educational experiences for our students.



Dr. Les Martisko and Dr. Brian Talbott present Jack Peterson with the Lifetime Service Award for his significant contributions to USAD and his 35+ years of service.