

***A HISTORY OF
UNITED STATES
ACADEMIC DECATHLON***



July 31, 2023

*****Appendices updated on an annual basis***

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INTRODUCTION TO THE UNITED STATES ACADEMIC DECATHLON

The United States Academic Decathlon (USAD) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization devoted to enhancing the quality of education. Through the efforts of its board and membership, USAD provides students of all learning levels the opportunity to excel academically through team competition. Although USAD works to achieve this in several ways, to students, teachers, and family members across the country, the USAD is primarily thought of as a competition. From local “heats,” to regional, then state, and finally an annual national competition, USAD recognizes outstanding achievement on the part of individuals and schools in ten different academic fields of endeavor: mathematics, language and literature, art, music, economics, speech, interview, essay, Super Quiz, and social science or science alternating depending upon the Super Quiz topic.

A description of the organization, its current members, and current, past, and upcoming competition dates and venues are all available on the USAD website, www.usad.org. To understand more about the germ of an idea that grew into this competition, it is necessary to travel back more than 60 years to a German prison camp inhabited by members of the United States Army Air Corps.

DREAM FOR THE FUTURE

During World War II, a young B-17 pilot was shot down over Italy and imprisoned in *Stalag Luft 1* in Barth, Germany. During his seventeen months of imprisonment, he had plenty of time to reflect on several topics. One of them was education. Over time, he was able to secure paper and pencils, and he began a journal. On one page of this journal he wrote: “. . .they ought to have more school rallies and a *decathlon of studies*.”

More than twenty years later, the green USAAF lieutenant had become an elementary school principal in Santa Ana, California. Finally, he was able to translate that concept born so long ago – a competition that would encourage a passion for learning and help motivate youth towards intellectual and academic achievement. As he reflected later, Dr. Robert Peterson had “come up with an idea that can help more students reach their educational potential and become better rounded students.”

Dr. Peterson’s idea called for students to demonstrate knowledge and educational skills in ten different academic areas. And, unlike other competitions, the teams of students competing would not be composed of only “the best and the brightest.” His idea was to form teams comprised of six members: two ‘A’ (Honor), two ‘B’(Scholastic), and two ‘C’(Varsity) students. They would compete against students at their own level, but all students would answer the same questions.



Dr. Robert Peterson, USAAF Lieutenant, served as a B-17 pilot during World War II. The seeds for Academic Decathlon were planted when he was imprisoned during the war.

Dr. Peterson reasoned, “The average students would benefit the most. They know if they can stay out of trouble and just get ‘C’s they will graduate. They do not work to their fullest potential. The ‘A’ students can benefit by having to study in all areas and not just concentrate on the subjects they know and like best. They usually need rounding out and will benefit from helping mentor the rest of the team. Their social skills will increase.”

When Dr. Peterson became a candidate for the office of Orange County Superintendent of Schools, he promised that, if elected, he would start an Academic Decathlon program. He envisioned a governing board comprised of business leaders. After all, they would ultimately benefit the most from having more well-rounded students apply for work.

Initially, the idea was that competition tests would be developed by the local Department of Education and would include traditional academic subjects as well as a written essay, an interview, and prepared and impromptu speeches. Each team would have a coach. The coaches would be local educators, and the competitors would be drawn from juniors and seniors enrolled in Orange County schools. In one of his campaign speeches Dr. Peterson stated: “Our students *can* work hard and *do* have spunk and stamina when properly motivated. I believe it is time we re-instill in our young people a sense of competition in learning, which not only helps to achieve greatness, but maturity and self-fulfillment.” Dr. Peterson was elected in 1966, and in 1967, a Decathlon trial run was held.

ORANGE COUNTY ACADEMIC DECATHLON

The first Orange County Academic Decathlon (OCAD) was held in November 1968 at Bolsa Grande High School, in Garden Grove, California. One hundred and three high school students from twenty-two public and private schools participated, and the winning team was Foothill High School. Members of the first Board of Directors included representatives from telephone, gas, and electric companies, an airline, a law firm, a CPA firm, an insurance company, and Disneyland. Each firm agreed to donate \$5,000. The Orange County Department of Education figured out the logistics: finding competition locations, developing the tests, and recruiting judges and volunteers. A local caterer, a mother whose child went to school in the district, provided lunch.

In a 1968 article in the *Los Angeles Times*, student Gary Biddle of Orange High School called the decathlon “an excellent idea that gave the students a chance to compare their performance with those from other schools.” John Grant of Lowell High School added, “It’s more exciting and stimulating and at a better level than regular schools’ tests or college board exams.” An editorial from Bolsa Grande High School’s newspaper *El Diestro* stated: “Before the Decathlon, the smartest students won scholarships and the most athletic students won fame; the average student was left out. In looking for the ‘best,’ it is easy to forget that the average student forms the basis of modern society. Before the average student couldn’t hope to enter competition and win. Now he has a chance. It’s time to reward the normal, everyday, well-rounded members of our communities.”

In 1969, the second Orange County competition grew to 175 students from 29 schools. The winning team represented Anaheim High School. In 1970, individual winners of the third Annual Academic Decathlon were awarded with a trip to Sacramento to meet Governor Ronald Reagan. The students spent a half hour with the governor discussing ecology, higher education, the future of the economy, and the possibility of obtaining the vote for eighteen-year-olds.

CALIFORNIA ACADEMIC DECATHLON – THE FIRST STEPS

In 1978, Dr. Peterson met with Dr. William Johnston, Superintendent of Los Angeles Unified School District, Harry Handler, Deputy, and Dr. Paul Possemato, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Instruction. The purpose of the meeting was to encourage LAUSD to field a team to compete in the first annual State of California academic competition. Dr. Peterson indicated that the Academic Decathlon was an Orange County success but Orange County, at the time, was predominately suburban, Anglo, and middle class. He wanted to prove its value in an urban setting. Los Angeles was the place for such a success. Dr. Johnston gave the job of fielding the school team to Dr. Possemato, stating that the best school to represent the district would be one that could provide a multi-ethnic team.



Dr. and Mrs. Peterson traveled by plane to meet with Governor Ronald Reagan in Sacramento.

Dr. Possemato met with University High School principal Paul Godfrey, who enthusiastically agreed to support the program. The two coaches were George Bonorris and Barbara Golding. Dr. Possemato collected all of the magazines, books and other research materials that the team needed. University High School competed in April 1979 at Chapman College in what was now called the California Academic Decathlon (CAD). Schools from 23 counties participated in the competition, and

the following year participation increased to 43 counties.

In 1981, Dr. Possemato, with the help of his assistant Tak Nakahara, administrative assistant Joan Evans and Jane Pollock, increased the LAUSD teams to thirty one high schools. In 1981-82 LAUSD held its first internal competition. The banquet was funded by Coca Cola, an early sponsor which was secured through contact with the Olympic Organizing Committee. The committee doled out surplus profits to worthy causes. Although the banquet had already been taken care of financially, parents and students were charged a reasonable fee so that \$60,000 could be collected for future competitions. Because of Dr. Possemato's role as High School Division

Superintendent, California Academic Decathlon competition grew to fifty participating LAUSD high schools. The LAUSD Founders Trophy was presented to the first place team in honor of Dr. Robert Peterson. As the LAUSD involvement grew, Dr. Bill Johnston and Mr. Phil Bardos, Board Member for LAUSD, took a more direct role. The inclusion of LAUSD proved that the competition could work in urban schools. A new idea had begun to grow to make this competition a national event.

REGIONAL EXPANSION

In 1980, Dr. Peterson phoned State Superintendents and high school principals throughout the western United States. He explained the competition's concept and provided suggestions as to how states, school districts, and individual schools could begin a program. He asked each Superintendent to give him the name of the principal of a school that might be interested. His plan called for each principal to select a teacher to serve as coach. Out-of-state educators were invited to observe the California competitions held from 1979 to 1981. Texas was one of the first states to visit a competition. They quickly raised funds, set up a Board of Directors, and won their first national championship. Arizona came on board next.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE USAD

In part, the evolution of the USAD into a national competition was inspired by the fact that the city of Los Angeles was hosting the Olympic Games in 1984. The ten events of the USAD provided a perfect parallel to the athletic decathlon – a focus of each Olympiad. The USAD board contacted Peter Ueberroth and the Olympic Organizing Committee and asked them to recognize the USAD as an adjunct to the Olympics, but the USOC did not accept this relationship.

Refusing to be discouraged, in 1981 Dr. Robert Peterson, Mr. Phil Bardos, and Mr. William Patton, Jr. brought together a group of business and educational leaders to form the first Board of Directors of the United States Academic Decathlon. USAD was recognized as the “premier scholastic competition in America.” The Board of Directors acted as a “hands on” Board with members accepting responsibility for handling the various functions associated with the organization. Mr. Phil Bardos was elected CEO, Mr. William Patton, Jr. was elected President, and Dr. Robert Peterson was named “Founder”. By-laws were developed and papers of incorporation were filed. Dr. Alfonso B. Perez was asked to accept the responsibilities of Executive Director. USAD was established as a formal, legal, tax-exempt national organization.

In the first years that the USAD national competition took place, Dr. Perez coordinated the board’s key administrative responsibilities. He was responsible for scheduling all business conducted by the Board, and acted as Secretary/Treasurer and chief team recruiter. Dr. Peterson and his staff, Nate Lamm, Susie Liberman, and Ann Joynt, developed study guides and other competition materials. Susie Liberman and her staff in Orange County ran the national competition, providing tests and equipment and training volunteers. Dr. Alex Aloia was responsible for coordinating competition site facilities at Loyola Marymount University, where he was Dean in the School of Education. Kristin Caperton was instrumental in fund raising. Dr. Perez was able to get



Dr. Alfonso Perez, was a member of the First Board of Directors and served as Executive Director from 1984-1987. He currently serves on the USAD Board of Directors.

free bus transportation from the LAUSD Department of Transportation for the students to travel to the various sites involved in the competition and other decathlon activities. Suzanne Eisler Roberts coordinated all activities outside the competition including the logistics in getting the students to Disneyland and the activities at the Jonathan Club. She planned the ice cream socials and even ironed the flags!

THE FIRST NATIONAL COMPETITION

The first United States Academic Decathlon national competition was held in 1982. Students from 18 states participated. The winning team was Palo Alto High School in Palo Alto, California. James Garcia, a student from Reno, Nevada was recognized as the first “C” student to record a perfect score of 1,000. His essay, entitled “A Casual Madness,” analyzed Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and was published in the *L.A. Times*.

In a survey conducted of students in 1982, a Scholastic student wrote, “Personally, participation gave me a sense of achievement and stimulated my buried sense of competition. Academically, it served as a reminder that I could achieve whatever I wanted in high school.” Student Ben Zion Argov of Palm Springs reflected in April of 1983: “I won an award in the decathlon, but the greatest prize I received was the tremendous amount of knowledge and skill in oratorical and written self-expression, and in the numerous areas of study in which decathlon members competed. Looking back, my only regret is that I didn’t participate in the decathlon the year before as well. May no one forego the opportunity to compete in the same.” Dr. Peterson’s vision was coming true.



Attending the National Competition Banquet in 1984 are from left to right: William B. Patton, Jr., USAD President; Phillip G. Bardos, Chairman of the Board and Founder, USAD; Joe LaBonte, President, 20th Century Fox; Suzanne Eisler Roberts, Student Activities President; Dr. Alfonso Perez, Executive Director; and Dr. Robert Peterson, Founder, USAD.

For the first five years of national competition, students were greeted at LAX and transported by school buses to the competition hotel. Upon the students’ arrival, they attended the ice cream social, where they exchanged state mementos. The competition took place at Loyola Marymount College. In addition to the quizzes in the academic subjects and the essays, interviews, and speeches, USAD’s unique Super Quiz provided a

new dimension in academic competition. The Super Quiz format provided the audience with a chance to view the contestants at work. It was the culminating and most

exciting event in the competition. The audience encouraged the students by cheering and had the opportunity to watch students who truly enjoyed learning. The emcee mentioned the word “coaches,” and the students, without prompting, rose to their feet cheering for their coaches.

Afterwards, the students were transported to the Friday night party at the Jonathan Club where they played volleyball, swam in the ocean, and ate hamburgers. It was the first time some of the students had seen the ocean and surfed on waves. They were elated by this experience! On Saturday, LAUSD buses took the decathletes to Disneyland for a special tour arranged by Dr. Peterson. The first Awards Banquet took place on April 16, 1982 at the Biltmore Hotel, in Los Angeles, California. With the glitziest presentation ever, Mr. Joseph LaBonte, the President of Twentieth Century-Fox, presided with lights panning the crowd. Celebrities from Twentieth Century-Fox, including Sally Struthers and Jamie Farr, presented medals to the winners.

Another Dr. Peterson brainstorm was the creation of a unique experience involving business executives who were solicited to sponsor tables at the Awards Luncheon for \$1,000. As an incentive for participating, corporations were invited to send one of their executives to join one of the winning state teams to “dialogue” with these Academic Decathletes. They discussed how teams prepared for the competition and the positive rewards and learning experiences they received as academic decathletes. In turn, the corporate executive could share with them what corporations look for in recruiting applicants for jobs in the professional and business world. After about an hour, the team and executive would adjourn and proceed to their table at the Awards Dinner and, together, experience the exciting and emotional process of recognizing the individual medal winners and the team trophy winners. The result was a direct and involved participation by corporate sponsors who were positively impressed with the students and the Decathlon concept. The “Dialogues” were used as a unique and positive approach for funding the USAD National Competition’s Awards Luncheons in Los Angeles during the first four years of this event. USAD was able to raise about \$40,000 and continued corporate support through the first five years in Los Angeles.

USAD Board Members, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation (one time only), and the staffs of Orange County Schools and the Los Angeles Unified School District assisted with awards luncheons and recognition of individual and team

winners. Dr. Robert Dockson, CEO California Federal S&L, and Kristin Caperton coordinated funding. In-kind support services from Dr. Peterson and Orange County Schools, the Los Angeles Unified School District, Loyola/Marymount University, Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, Meserve, Mumper & Hughes Legal Firm, Walt Disney Productions, and Xerox Corporation, Blue Shield and ARCO, Patton's health firm, all contributed funding to defray expenses incurred associated with the USAD competition. Free tickets to Disneyland were donated for five years, and LAUSD school buses provided transportation to the park.

THE KRISTIN CAPERTON AWARD

The Kristin Caperton Award was established to honor an individual who had motivated others with her determination and hard work in spite of physical adversity. In her short life, Kristin initiated an abuse center, a Junior League Professional group, and chaired USAD's first two award luncheons. When Kristin Caperton was hospitalized in 1983, she continued to work to help fund the United States Academic Decathlon from her bedside. After Kristin's

untimely death, Suzanne Roberts suggested that a memorial award be given in Kristin's name. Awardees prior to 1997 included teams or individuals who participated at the national competition who had overcome personal and physical challenges and were inspirations to others. Since 1997, all Decathlon participants nationwide are eligible for this award and, as of 2003, awardees received a \$1500 scholarship award. As of 2007, there were two Caperton Awards, one to a USAD team participant who is honored at the USAD Banquet, and the second is presented on the school site of a Decathlete whose team did not participate in the national finals. Currently, all Decathletes are eligible to receive the Caperton Award(s). Please see list of all awardees in appendix.



Brian Landrum, from Indiana, is presented the Kristin Caperton Award by Suzanne Roberts at the 1994 National Banquet. He is accompanied by his parents Karen and Mike Landrum.

EXPLORING EXPANSION AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Dr. Peterson's dream of taking this unique concept of academic decathlon to an international level was realized by expanding USAD internationally. In 1983, teams from Canada, Korea, and Mexico participated at a separate event involving different tests and curricular materials. It was held in conjunction with the USAD competition held in Los Angeles in 1983. A second "World Competition" was held in conjunction with the USAD competition in Los Angeles 1984. This time, three teams from Canada, two from Mexico, and one team each from Korea and New Zealand competed. As a result of these positive experiences, Dr. Peterson was able to generate interest to form a separate organization with the title of International Decathlon for Academics (IDA). However, USAD chose not be involved officially because USAD itself still had a long development process ahead (see history of IDA in appendix).

THE NATIONAL COMPETITION MATURES

By 1984, schools representing thirty states participated in the finals in Los Angeles, battling against each other in an intense one-day competition. J.J. Pearce High School of Richardson, Texas took top honors for the first of three consecutive years. *World Book Encyclopedia* publisher Dr. William Nault, who had requested a seat on the USAD Board, donated \$10,000 and committed his company to produce the USAD Study



*The Academic Decathlon Medal---
A Medal of Honor!!*

Guide. World Book directed a strong public relations campaign during the 1984 finals. As a result, the competition was covered by ABC Morning News, the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *L.A. Times* and many other publications. President Reagan, who as California governor provided so much support to the OCAD, sent a telegram of congratulations to competitors, and invited the winning team to the White House.

Corporate sponsorship grew as Lennox Industries, represented by John Norris, Jr. pledged a grant of \$50,000 a year for six years, and American Honda Foundation committed to an annual donation of \$40,000 for five years to provide scholarships given to Decathlon winners. The Northrop Corporation, represented by Rogg Collins, later USAD President, presented \$30,000 in scholarships to the overall gold, silver, and bronze medalists in the National Finals. The corporation, later known as Northrop Grumman, granted \$5,000 to the Individual Gold Medalists, \$3,000 to the Individual Silver Medalists, and \$2,000 to the Individual Bronze medalists in the Honors, Scholastic and Varsity levels. As the complexity and variety of board tasks and responsibilities increased, the board named Dr. Perez to be the first paid Executive Director.

In 1986, 60,000 students representing 2,000 schools in 40 states took part in early rounds of the competition. At the Awards Banquet, via videotape, the Honorable Thomas Bradley, Mayor of the City of Los Angeles, presented an Award of Academic Excellence to Mr. Paul Ziffren who had inspired personal integrity during the Olympic

Games. His encouragement of the Youth Commission provided an impetus for the first USAD competition in 1982. Additionally, six students at Nationals received Most Valuable Participants Awards, and they traveled for a week to Washington, D.C. Highlights included viewing the originals from the Art competition at the National Gallery, attending a reception with members of the House of Representatives, touring Mount Vernon, and meeting with Secretary of Education William Bennett. Winners nominated by their coaches were Eric Colby, Arizona; Bela Patel, Scarborough, Maine; Sandre Garrard, Moscow, Idaho; Mark Walker, Shreveport, Louisiana; Joe Staus, Mankato, Minnesota; and Jeannine Dolan, Rochester, New York. Chaperone Suzanne Eisler Roberts remembers a poignant experience when Eric played a Rachmaninoff's concerto from an original score at the National Archives.

At the 1986-87 national competition, David Florey, a C- student on the national championship team from John Marshall High School, an inner city school in Los Angeles, won the individual overall championship. This was the first time a varsity student had ever captured that top spot! When the 1987 national champions returned from competition in Irving, Texas, they were greeted by 200 screaming classmates, cheerleaders and parents. There were television cameras from every network in Los Angeles, and a full color picture of the team was carried on the front page of the *Los Angeles Times*. The team met with President Reagan in his office in Century City, and Mayor Tom Bradley dropped in by helicopter to present greetings and resolutions. That same afternoon, the team was picked up by limousine and taken to the NBC studio to be interviewed for the *Tonight Show*. The Marshall Team and David Florey were a topic on NBC *Nightly News* with Tom Brokaw the Monday after winning in Dallas. NBC described the pep rally and included several interviews, including the one with David. David's story continues to provide motivation for decathletes.

USAD INTERNAL CHANGES

The Board of Directors is the governing body of USAD, with the organization's officers and directors being responsible for its operations. In USAD's early years, it was the "hands-on" Board of Directors together with part-time Executive Director Al Perez who managed the USAD program and national competition. The Board of Directors created a Board of



USAD Board of Directors at the National Competition in San Antonio, Texas in 2000.

Trustees to advise the Board of Directors and to assist with fund-raising. Although initially the Board of Trustees raised the majority of the funds necessary for the operation of the organization, its impact on USAD declined as other funding sources were found and the Board of Trustees was subsequently disbanded.

Within a few years of its formation, USAD's only major supporter, World Book Encyclopedia, assumed a leading role in the operations of the organization, and Bob Paltiel (World Book's marketing director) served as the President of USAD from 1986 to 1987. During this period of time, World Book and Mr. Paltiel made substantial contributions to USAD and its program. With Dr. Perez, as Executive Director, being responsible for all USAD administrative matters, World Book took over the development of the Study Guide, testing and public relations. World Book's "adoption" of USAD was, in large part, the result of Mr. Paltiel's personal interest in USAD. The involvement of World Book in the operations of USAD, as well as World Book's perceived connection with USAD, were evidenced by the fact that USAD letterhead and all materials emanating from USAD included the words "Testing in Association with World Book".

The degree of influence of World Book upon USAD and the program was of some concern to certain members of the Board. In part as an attempt to return to the Board more control over the operations of USAD, Jack Peterson was elected as

President of USAD in July 1987. Since it was suspected that this change might result in reduced support from World Book, a major concern of the Board and its new President became whether the organization could survive without that support.

In his dual roles as World Book marketing director and USAD President, Mr. Paltiel had been using World Book personnel and resources to provide many of the functions required to run the competition. World Book had been providing virtually all of the funding for the organization, and had been responsible for reviewing and editing the Study Guide and all tests, printing and distributing the Study Guide, and conducting public relations. At that time, USAD had no significant funding other than from World Book, neither offices nor office equipment, and no staff other than its dedicated part-time volunteer Executive Director Al Perez. It was clear that, if USAD lost World Book's support, the Board and the officers would be required to take an even greater role in the day-to-day operations of the organization, and that additional financial support would be immediately required.

Accepting the fact that World Book's support could not be relied upon in the long-term, the Board addressed the organization's need to prepare for its assumption of all responsibility for competition funding and operations as soon as possible. The major issues facing the USAD leadership became: hiring a full-time executive director and staff, finding corporate offices and acquiring necessary office equipment, and securing funding to supplant that previously provided by World Book. Additionally, in furtherance of its continuing goal of holding the national competition at sites outside of California, the Board needed to secure competition sites for 1989 and beyond, all while ensuring that the competition continued to grow in terms of participation and national exposure.

In 1988, Dr. Perez resigned as executive director and his years of service were recognized at the national competition in San Antonio, Texas, with a presentation to him by former USAD CEO Robert Broaddus of a beautiful Seiko desk clock. USAD employed Ann Joynt as its first full-time executive director. Ann immediately took steps to make USAD an independent and effective organization. Under the direction of USAD's officers, Ann obtained in-kind contributions of office space and office furnishings, acquired necessary office equipment and supplies, hired additional staff, initiated the USAD product line, developed curricular outlines, coordinated the preparation of the Study Guide and tests (first with World Book and then on her

own, once World Book terminated its relationship with USAD), established relationships with and support services for State Directors, standardized the competition scoring process and USAD procedures, monitored and assisted with the national competition, and solicited grants to fund USAD operations, which resulted in new corporate sponsors. For the first few years of her tenure as Executive Director, Ann effectively “was” USAD. As a result of her efforts and those of USAD’s officers and directors, within a very short time USAD was operating relatively smoothly and independently of World Book.

THE NATIONAL COMPETITION “GOES NATIONAL”

By 1986, the national competition had been held in Los Angeles for five straight years. When plans for the sixth competition ran into difficulties, board member Winston Power of Texas rescued the competition by offering to host the 1987 and 1988 competitions in Texas. He pointed out that these difficulties could be turned into a strength for the competition, since USAD would not be a true national program so long as the national competition continued to be held in California. Consequently, the Board policy was changed to actively solicit other locations.

Early national competition required the state conducting the competition to raise substantial funds and to coordinate and recruit volunteers. It was also at the competition in 1987 that the state directors realized that they needed to organize themselves so that they would be able to provide more input into the decision-making process for Academic Decathlon.

As expected, in December 1988, World Book informed USAD that it was terminating its relationship with USAD. The Board extended its gratitude to World Book for its significant commitment of time and funds that it had made to USAD over the past years and presented World Book with a token of its appreciation at the national competition in Rhode Island. USAD was now on its own, and USAD had substantial new financial obligations, most importantly the salary for Ann Joynt, the creation of an operational office, and taking over the work that had been done by World Book. The Board set about to fund-raise in earnest. Among their efforts was to seek support from McGraw Hill and later to hire individuals to work with both public relations and fundraising. Both efforts were fruitless. In 1989 Frann Shermet joined the organization as Executive Coordinator. Through continued efforts through that two year period, the organization moved from one without any offices, staff, or significant assets, and became an independent functioning organization.

Meanwhile, the national growth of the competition was reflected by the selection of Providence, RI and Des Moines, IA as sites for the national finals in 1989 and 1990. The 1989 finals were also the first to provide live television of the Super Quiz competition.

USAD STATE DIRECTORS ORGANIZE

As the competition began to grow, USAD state directors recognized the importance of organizing themselves and working together as an integral part of the national organization. The organization they formed, which became the National Council of Academic Decathlon State Executive Directors (NCADSED) in 1989, first met in San Antonio, TX in 1988. Their first President, David Steadman of Idaho, introduced President-elect Anita Lohr, Secretary/Treasurer Gladys Foris, members of the USAD Board of Directors, USAD Executive Director Al Perez, and incoming USAD Executive Director Ann Joynt. Ms. Joynt reported on new national objectives and commitments of the USAD Board including: offering national support for gathering financial and in-kind resources, providing assistance in recruiting corporate support for each state, giving one study guide for the coach of each school team as indicated by the State Director, preparing a data base of high school names and addresses so that newsletters could be sent to coaches, and making changes in USAD test distribution. Tests would no longer be used as study materials; the scope and content of each test area would be reduced, and practice test manuals would be prepared and sent to everyone after November. USAD would also prepare an outline indicating the



Ms. Anita Lohr, who was the State Director from Arizona, served as President of the National Council of Academic Decathlon State Executive Directors. She currently serves on the USAD Board of Directors.

percentage of questions which would be written to cover each area of the study guide. State Directors were also asked to consider the concept of a nine-member team and make a recommendation to the Board. State Director Carla Brooks of Utah gave a report of a meeting held by the State Directors' Board with USAD members and representatives of the San Antonio host committee in September 1987. President Steadman had suggested that such a meeting with the site committee be held each year.

President-elect Anita Lohr presented proposed Bylaws for the National Council of Academic Decathlon State Executive Directors. These Bylaws were discussed and approved with some corrections. The purpose of the "Council" was

to support and strengthen Academic Decathlon programs throughout the United States, to assist USAD in improving coordination of the Academic Decathlon program, and to receive gifts and contributions or real and personal property to further the Academic Decathlon program. Membership of the council included several classes: active (only one Director would be allowed active membership per state), associate (individuals wishing to support the program through their membership and assistance to the state directors), organization affiliate (commercial or professional service firms), and honorary (past presidents and current USAD Board members). Only active members would have the right to vote, and there would be only one vote per state.

The governing body of the State Council was called the Board of Directors, and their responsibilities included carrying out the program and policies voted by the membership in its annual meeting and exercising reasonable current policy making authority. The Board of Directors of the Council would consist of officers and two Regional Representatives from each of the four Council regions: Eastern, Central, Mountain, and Pacific. The representatives had to be active members. Officers included president, vice-president/president-elect, secretary/treasurer and immediate past president, each of whom would serve for a term of two years. The Executive Committee was composed of the Officers of the Council, and they would have the authority of the Board of Directors to act in any emergency situation. The entire Council would hold an annual membership meeting in conjunction with the USAD competition activities, the Board of Directors would meet at least once a year, and the Executive Committee would meet at the call of the President. Standing committees were appointed annually by the President, and the Council operated at all times on a nonprofit basis.

A meeting of USAD Board Members and State Directors was held after the Super Quiz competition in Providence in 1989, and the State Directors appreciated the efforts of the Board to listen to and help them. Yet, there were still concerns, primarily in the area of ensuring that Academic Decathlon would truly grow to be a “national” competition. Jack Peterson wrote a letter to the Board as he left the Presidency expressing those concerns. He stated: “We still have a severe problem in expanding the program to additional states and in those states presently participating.” The ongoing effort to ensure the broadest and deepest participation of schools in each of the fifty states continues to be a prime focus of the efforts of USAD and the state directors organization, now called USAD-SD.

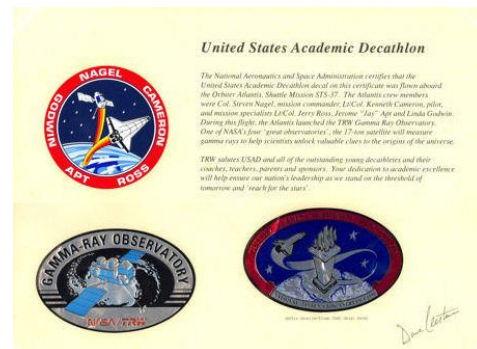
A PERIOD OF RAPID GROWTH

The Speech Showcase began at the Los Angeles national competition in 1991. The showcase was developed to highlight winning speeches and to provide an additional opportunity to recognize student achievement. It also allowed for more interaction in the community as local celebrities often were invited to act as judges. It was very well received when it began and continues to be a successful and popular part of subsequent competitions.

Through the efforts of both the National Board and the State Directors, through NCAEDS, the competition grew rapidly. By 1991, 41 states took part, and Canada also participated with three teams. Three teams, including the gold medalists from J.J. Pearce High School in Richardson, Texas, D.C.'s Benjamin Banneker High School, and Alexandria, Virginia's Thomas Jefferson High School of Science and Technology were invited to the Rose Garden of the White House where they were honored by President George Herbert Walker Bush (see appendix).

The United States Academic Decathlon decal was flown aboard the Orbiter Atlantis in 1991 and was given to each coach to celebrate the Super Quiz theme: Space Exploration. The decal was also flown on board the U.S. Space Shuttle Mission Orbiter Discovery, STS-39, April 28-May 6, 1991.

In 1992, President George H.W. Bush invited nine winning teams, including regional champions, the first, second and third place champions, and the Small Schools Winner to the Rose Garden. The President praised the Decathletes for their achievements, the coaches for their dedication, and the sponsors for creating the partnership between education and the private sector. He also singled out the scholarship winners for their accomplishments including the Kristin Caperton awardee. He concluded the historic occasion by sending a letter congratulating USAD's unique concept. The President referred to Academic Decathletes as new heroes on our high school campuses (see appendix).



Pictured is the USAD NASA Space Decal which was flown aboard a shuttle mission in 1991.

In 1993, President Bill Clinton welcomed the gold medalists from Plano East High School of Plano, Texas; the silver medalists from Taft High of Los Angeles; and the bronze medal winners of Mountain View High School of Mesa, Arizona. He especially honored Sonny Chu whose father suffered a severe stroke just days before the national competition. Sonny still won the highest overall score in the nation!

MEETING A TESTING CHALLENGE

Unfortunately, USAD experienced a difficult situation in 1995. This unfortunate situation provided USAD the opportunity to demonstrate its ability to monitor and ultimately validate test scores. A primary concern was the integrity of the competition and the testing procedure within each State event and that a process was in place to challenge abnormal circumstances. The effective handling and remediation of these unusual results demonstrated the strength and ability of the State and National organizations. It was now clear that USAD had matured as a credible national competition with appropriate vehicles in place to protect the integrity of the competitors and the competition.

RESOLVING ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

In the early 1990's, USAD established a curriculum committee to develop a three-year theme for the curriculum and Super Quiz. The idea was that there would be a general connection among the three themes in each cycle, and the themes would be made public in sets of three. There were two three-year cycles. The first cycle was done for years 1997-98, 1998-99, and 1999-2000, and the themes were "Looking Outward", "Looking Inward," and "Looking Forward: Creating the Future." The overarching theme that sought to link together the years 2000-01, 2001-02, and 2002-03 was "Understanding Ourselves and the World." USAD's decision to stop the three-year cycle approach was based on feedback from coaches (via the Ad Hoc Committee on Improving USAD). Some coaches felt that the connection between each of the themes within the three-year cycle was nebulous and vague and was useless from a pedagogical standpoint. Some coaches also voiced concerns that the themes themselves were too vague, abstract, and conceptual and urged USAD to move toward more topical/concrete themes. The Field Advisory Committee, created in 2001, recommended that USAD's curriculum continue to be developed around a central theme. However, the committee also recommended that the themes should be more topical than conceptual and stated that three-year program cycles with an overarching theme were not necessary.



Pictured are Jack S. Peterson and Franklin Reinhauer, USAD Board Members in 1999. Mr. Peterson wrote the first By-Laws for USAD and served as President of USAD 1987-89.

The USAD began the process of an important transformation during the period from 1996-2000. One might characterize it as an effort to incorporate some amount of structure and principles-based decision making regarding the following policy issues: the interface between the national and state organizations, national identity and program growth, equity and accountability involving the

performance of USAD staff, and quality control of tests and related products as well as

revenue.

During this time, there was considerable friction between the USAD Board and the state directors. The primary concern centered around the perception on the part of state organizations that national policy worked against their efforts to keep the competitions timely and cost effective. One example was in the area of security. After the security breach in the Chicago competition, the National Board considered that test security was the matter of highest priority. The state organizations sympathized with the concerns of the board, but they were concerned that additional security would make it more difficult to distribute the test materials in a timely and economically sensible manner. The debate over whether or not test materials should be available in electronic form and whether or not practice tests and “official” tests should be viewed similarly was a continuing issue.

A second area of disagreement between the national board and the state directors concerned equity in the national competitions, specifically the dominance of schools from California, Texas, and Illinois. The USAD Board adopted various strategies that were designed to level the playing field in a manner intended to benefit each participant while leaving none worse off. It was the point of view of the national board that the major cause of the imbalance was the unequal availability of resources among competing states. Some members of the board believed that in some states, coaches played a disproportionate role in assisting in student research. The USAD Board believed that the continuing dominance of a few states impeded the ability to grow the program nationally. The state directors recognized the logic in those arguments, but they were concerned that efforts in “leveling the playing field” should not come at the expense of the pure research model of the competition. There were many vocal participants whose programs benefited from the pure research model of the competition and felt any change unwarranted.

A third issue involved national identity and program growth. The perception that the state associations were operating independently and without the benefit of a strong national umbrella organization was of concern to the USAD Board. They identified a number of marginally performing states and recommended increasing revenues and visibility as ways to grow the program. The Board’s idea was that a more uniform methodology, guided and supported by the national office would offer the best chance for overall growth. While applauding the aims and intentions of the

national board, state directors worried that an overarching national identity for the program would compromise their continued ability to work with local and regional sources of support.

A fourth issue regarded equity and accountability involving the performance of USAD staff. Issues of personnel management became a focus of USAD Board discussions because of the need to consider total compensation as a function of job description. This resulted in steps to implement in-kind benefits on an equitable basis and as a function of seniority. The question of bonus compensation was also frequently discussed because the staff was charged with the responsibility for program growth. There was also the matter of curriculum and support materials development that required focused efforts that went beyond the traditional responsibilities for overseeing a smooth national competition.

In addition to those disagreements between the national and state boards, there were also some areas of concern within the national board about their own functions. One of these concerns dealt with a perceived lack of revenue to insure quality control of test and related materials. Because of the loss of some significant recurring annual grants and contributions, the Board accepted the responsibility of awarding scholarships. Additionally, the Board determined that study materials provided by third-party vendors were inconsistent in quality and completeness from one source to another. Finally, it was agreed that responsibilities needed to be shared to ensure optimum quality control. The national office was responsible for quality control of the national finals, but budgetary responsibilities and the challenges of securing venue and volunteers became the responsibility of the host state.

As a result of the frank discussions resulting from these internal and external issues, the USAD Board implemented a number of programs and policies. In addition to the promulgation of the individual programs, the national board made a conscious effort to involve state directors in all discussions about future policy. It was agreed that all future policies should be designed with the long-range goals of growing the program, leveling the playing field, strengthening state programs, increasing quality control, and recruiting and retaining staff.

The Board authorized the executive director, Dr. James Alvino, to conduct a trial version of a critical thinking activity that was tested for the first time at the California National Finals in 1999. Dr. Paul Possemato had proposed this idea

for problem solving at several board meetings. He suggested that although the Decathlon competition did not promote rote memory only, the critical thinking activity would help to offset a perception that this was the case. Although some Board members and coaches were concerned that a problem-solving competition could replace one of the ten existing areas, Dr. Possemato argued that it would replace nothing but act as an alternate competition involving the participation of even more schools at the national level. His idea was that teams who finished second in their state competitions could compete in this activity. There was only limited participation, and the results of the experiment were inconclusive.

In an effort to level the playing field, the Board authorized a change in the national competitions that reduced the amount of original research required to compete successfully. A specific fraction of questions would be drawn from a known block of study material and the remaining questions would fall into the category regarding broad research.

GOALS OF THE USAD BOARD

In an effort to increase the number of participating schools within existing states and to recruit other states, the Board unanimously adopted a resolution to have some form of Academic Decathlon activity present in every high school in America. Candidates for involvement included virtual competitions and the use of technology. In an effort to build a bridge between the target students and former Decathletes, the Board authorized a project to stimulate alumni participation and approved the development of an alumni board of directors that would work closely with the USAD Board. At the national competition in Providence, Rhode Island, a group of alumni Decathletes came together and elected Michelle M. Thomas as its first president. The new organization voted to name Dr. Perez as an honorary alumnus. In 2005 the Board voted to refer this organization as a function for State Directors to develop. Former Decathlete, Coach, and State Director Michael Richards was the first decathlete USAD Board member.



USAD National Logo

In order to strengthen state programs, the USAD Board commissioned the design of a new national logo. The project was designed to provide the state associations with a visual link to a strong national organization for the purpose of securing support. The logo was developed with the in-kind support of the design firm of Point Zero in Marina del Rey, California. State Directors were invited to best practice retreats designed to create a strategy that could be used to strengthen states with marginal programs. The USAD Board also created a competitive grant program for state directors designed to support best practices concepts.

In order to increase quality control over the competitions, the USAD Board authorized testing and procurement of a scoring service to provide real-time updates on Super Quiz and to enable reliable posting of state rankings immediately after the competition. Recognizing that third-party vendors of Decathlon study materials were offering products of variable quality, and significantly increasing the cost of the competition, the USAD Board authorized the development of the “On Target” set of

study materials during the 1996 study year. The materials were developed in consultation with experts around the country, and several new board members were recruited to the National USAD Board based upon their skills in the areas of curriculum and test development. The first time that USAD produced resource guides in each subject area was for the 1999-2000 school year. Prior to that USAD published an art guide, a music guide, and a short subject areas guide that provided an overview of each subject area. There were some concerns about errors of fact in the resource guides and, soon after, USAD fine-tuned contracts for resource guide and test writers to better protect USAD's interests and to help assure the quality of the products developed. Additionally, USAD instituted review procedures for all curriculum and test materials to improve quality control.

To retain excellent national office staff, an effort was made to create job descriptions for every staff position. Compensation packages were discussed including direct salary, 401K and health benefits, and bonus compensation was also discussed to find an equitable method for rewarding staff for program growth and other measurable accomplishments over and above the duties outlined in the job descriptions. The Board made an effort to conduct regular and fair assessments of executive director performance and implemented a policy requiring the executive director to conduct performance review for other staff. In 2001, Executive Director James Alvino resigned,



Pictured are the United States Academic Decathlon State Directors at the National Competition in 2000 in San Antonio.

and Dr. Les Martisko was named Administrative Consultant.

By 2000, an important change took place which gave more responsibility to the State Directors. Coaches would be encouraged to communicate with State Directors who would communicate with the USAD-SD Representative, who, in turn, would communicate

with the National Board. The formal name, NCADES (National Council of Academic Decathlon State Executive Directors), was changed to USAD-SD (United States Academic Decathlon-State Directors). The Bylaws Committee, chaired by Dr. Ruth S. Cowan, State Director from Georgia, revised the Bylaws originally passed in 1988, and those revisions were approved in April 2000 by the President, Dr. Les Martisko, President-elect Michael Richards, Secretary/Treasurer Sue Edwards, Past President Harriet Bush, Regional Representative/West Carla Brooks, Regional Representative/Mid-West Diane Hansen, Regional Representative/South Lee Meyer, and Regional Representative/Northeast Gus Picardo. There were some changes in classes of membership. There was no longer a category for Organization Affiliate, and Honorary members now included the President and Vice President of the USAD Board of the Directors as well as the Executive Director. A new category, "Life Member", included past presidents of the Council when no longer serving as State Director. The governing body of the council, the Board of Directors, continued to consist of the President, President-elect, Secretary/Treasurer, and immediate Past President, but there would now be only one Regional Representative from each of the four new Council regions: Northeast, South, Midwest, West. State Directors would meet by these regions and elect a representative and alternate at the annual meeting. There was also a new regrouping of states in the four regions. There would no longer be an executive committee. State Directors would meet on the site of the national competition yearly, but they would also meet in the summer with the President of the USAD Board. Although there was previously tension between the USAD Board and State Directors, tremendous strides have been made in providing a good working relationship between the two groups.

The importance of State Directors cannot be overemphasized; without them, there would be no state competitions. Although their responsibilities have not changed much during the years, their most difficult role continues to be in the area of fund raising. According to Jerry Helgeson, State Director from Idaho since 1988, the problem is that there are too many organizations chasing a limited amount of funds.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

In 2001, a Field Advisory Committee was created to develop recommendations for future operations of the United States Academic Decathlon. This committee was established so that representatives from the large constituency base of USAD could provide direct input to the Board of Directors on important issues that significantly impact the academic competition. The Committee was comprised of fourteen members, representing ten states, a Chairperson, a Facilitator, and the USAD President (Ex Officio). Resource and support staff included the Executive Director, the Curriculum Director, the Director of Operations, the Testing Director, and the Office Coordinator. Dr. James Augustin served as Chair at this time, and Dr. E. Arthur Stunard served as Facilitator of this Committee. The purpose of this meeting was to review a series of items/issues presented by USAD staff and to formulate recommendations for the USAD Board of Directors' consideration. These items/issues were divided into eight broad categories that included: 1) National Competition—Policies and Practices, 2) Curriculum and Test Development, 3) Scoring Procedures—National & State, 4) Technology, 5) Scholarship Program—Funding and Distribution, 6) Standardized Evaluations of National and State Competitions, 7) Communications/Public Relations, and 8) Development/Funding Plans. To facilitate the Field Advisory Committee deliberation process, each of the above items/issues was discussed, initially by a small group of five to ten members, then by the entire committee. All final recommendations were derived, by consensus of the entire committee.

As recorded and reported by Terry Boucher McKiernan on July 25, 2001, the Committee's many recommendations were offered for consideration during Board deliberations regarding the USAD Competition. The Committee recommendation that USAD maintain a three-division structure at the National Competition, with school enrollment being the only criterion used to determine the divisional assignment of teams, was implemented in 2002. At the completion of each state's championship competition, the Executive Committee reviews the enrollment statistics for each of the winners. Schools are then ordered, by enrollment from highest to lowest. The Large School Division consists of those teams whose school population comprises the greatest one-third. The Medium School division is comprised of those schools whose enrollment is in the middle third, and schools in the Small School Division are those whose

enrollment falls in the lowest third for that season. It is not unusual for a school to be in one category one year and in another category in the following year.

The Committee had also discussed the invitation of “Second Teams” to the National Competition. Although the committee recommended that a maximum of 55 teams be permitted to attend, utilizing a lottery system if necessary, the State Directors were in favor of inviting only one team per state, and the invitation of second teams to Nationals was discontinued after 2002.

Upon the advice of the Field Committee, a procedures manual was developed for the USAD National Competition in 2003. The manual was designed to serve as a guide for those involved in the planning and administration of the USAD National Competition. It listed the responsibilities of the host state and the competition coordinator. USAD and the host state would share the responsibility for all competition and contractual arrangements, including hotels and other venues, for the National Competition. The host state was responsible for organizing support at the local level, including volunteers, judges, transportation, entertainment and social events. The recommendation that USAD rotate the location of the National Competition to different geographic areas was implemented in 2003.



USAD Board of Directors in Erie, Pennsylvania in 2003.

The development of the 2003-2004 curriculum materials reflected the Field Advisory Committee’s recommendation that the competition theme be more topical than conceptual in nature. Additionally, while a portion of each subject might address a survey of fundamental topics, the outline now included a section or sections with a narrower focus to encourage an in-depth understanding of the given topic or topics. There would be an indication as to which of the outlined topics would require independent research and which of the topics would be covered in the Resource Guides. Subject areas from year to year would be such that no one subject would be absent from the curriculum for more than one year.

There were significant developments in 2002 with regard to the “communication” categories. USAD developed a bank of high-quality prompts

and provided essay and impromptu prompts to the states for use at competitions. Multiple prompts were made available for the sake of security. The Arizona Academic Decathlon's speech and interview consultants developed speech and interview training videos, and the manuals, written by Dr. Ruth Cowan, are in keeping with the content of the tapes. An essay-training manual was developed by USAD in concert with a panel of State Directors and writing assessment specialists. Students were now given a choice of three essay prompts during the essay event at the National Competition. These prompts could include either two prompts focused on the selected literature and one prompt focused on the Super Quiz topic or two prompts focused on the Super Quiz topic and one prompt focused on the selected literature. A modified holistic essay rubric, developed by Dr. Ruth Cowan and Mary Jane Koenig, was approved by the State Directors. This rubric specifically addressed the problem of off-prompt essays. USAD includes sample prompts in the Practice Test Booklet as well as the Essay Notebook Divider. Anchor papers are included in the Essay Training Materials. A committee recommendation that students not be penalized for revealing their school, state or location during the prepared speech, impromptu speech, and interview events at the National Competition was also implemented in 2002.

The Field Advisory Committee also addressed concerns with regard to technology. As a result, the scoring program was simplified and revised in 2002 to reflect a hybrid Windows/Mac format, so information would be easily exportable between platforms. USAD continues to offer online practice tests, and considerable work has been done on the USAD website to improve its effectiveness. Although there was a web cast of events at the National Competition in 2001, USAD's participants did not express much interest in this, and USAD has not received any requests for the web casting of events at Nationals. The committee also recommended that USAD create a solid database of information on its alumni population. This was developed in 2002 in order to garner support from USAD alums.

As advised by the Field Advisory Committee, efforts are being made to increase interest and participation in the program through videos and promotional brochures. Testimonials are being sought from coaches, current students and alumni. Such efforts would also be helpful in pursuing avenues for funding. Although responses to surveys are, generally, quite low, USAD continues to survey students, coaches, volunteers, State Directors and Board members in order to improve the program.

Two important philosophical changes came about in 2003. First, national staff would go into the states to recruit teams and offer training programs, utilizing a Coaches Manual. This manual exists on the USAD website and is regularly updated to ensure that each coach has all current information. Currently, USAD staff is demonstrating how the Academic Decathlon curriculum dovetails with National Standards in order to garner more support from school administrators.

CREATING THE VIRTUAL OFFICE

A major step in cutting costs and improving efficiency occurred in 2003, when USAD's headquarters and staff made the transition to a virtual office. This idea was proposed at the USAD Executive Committee meeting in July 2003. Mylene Chafe, USAD's Director of Operations, would begin working out of her home office in Council Bluffs, Iowa. USAD's other two full-time employees—Testing Director Daniele Grigsby and Curriculum Director Terry McKiernan—had already begun telecommuting on a part-time basis. USAD's mailing address had been a post office box for the past several years and was not tied to the physical location of the office. The transition was so smooth, that all functions continued without interruption and support to State Directors continued to their satisfaction. The California office space was officially closed on December 1, 2003.

SMALL SCHOOL COMPETITION AND OTHER CHANGES

In an attempt to provide an incentive for more teams to participate, in 2006 the Board authorized a virtual competition for small schools. The event coincided with the national competition dates. More than 180 students from twenty-one states participated in eight of the ten Academic Decathlon events, and over 100 medals were distributed. Saint Johns High School in Arizona won top honors. The competition was open to schools with total enrollments of fewer than 650 students. The competition's success was due in large part to USAD's partnership with a new corporate sponsor, Enlyght Software. Ashley Lane, a student at Tri-County High School in Buena Vista, Georgia, reflected on this opportunity: "I was amazed that our small school was given the privilege to compete in a national competition, especially an academic competition. We have normally done pretty well in state competition for Academic Decathlon. However, we are a small school and don't have a large group of students to choose from, so we are not well known for our academic success. It was a great honor to our entire community for a school in our area to get a chance to compete in the national online small school competition. We have raised the standards higher for our school than just competing at state competition and winning medals there. The opportunity to compete nationally makes more of our Academic Decathlon Team want to do better and score higher in more areas of the contest." The Virtual Competition, based on its success and popularity, expanded to medium-sized schools on a pilot basis beginning in 2008.

Two significant changes took place at the national competition in 2007. For several years, the Board had provided some support, both in terms of scoring and financing, for the national competitions. For the first time, the National Board assumed complete responsibility for the national competition in 2007 in Honolulu, Hawaii by running the competition and providing necessary financing. Also, for the first time, the Essay test was submitted on-line two weeks prior to the actual competition in Honolulu, and fourteen evaluators reviewed the essays before the competition took place. Such a change ensured fairness and consistency in the grading of the essays.

THE KEY TO USAD – THE COACH

At the heart of each competition is the coach. USAD not only changes the lives of students but also of teacher-coaches. The 1984-85 Study Guide reveals the thoughts of one teacher: “There is no thrill in the world greater than seeing an uninterested, going-nowhere student become excited and lit with a great desire to learn.” Several former decathletes have decided not only to pursue teaching careers, but also to coach their own decathlon teams. One former decathlete took his commitment to Academic Decathlon one step further. From 1987-88, Michael Richards participated as a student at Scarborough High School in Scarborough, Maine. While in college he would stop by the school on breaks to listen to speeches and offer his assistance in his major: finance/economics. From 1992-96, he joined his former coach, Ellen Ross, as a co-coach, and the team won the state competition each year for four years. Although his commitments at work did not allow him to continue to coach in 1997, he was strongly encouraged to help out at the state level. He mentored with the State Director, and, following the state competition, was named State Director. He served in this capacity from 1997-2005 and also served as President Elect/President of the State Director’s Association from 1998-2002. When asked why he became involved in Academic Decathlon, he indicated that Academic Decathlon’s challenge of competing in so many different areas is what attracted him to the competition. Michael stated: “Academic Decathlon is not for everyone, but when you compete you know you’re going up against the best of the best. The lessons and knowledge I learned as a competitor have stayed with me, and I continuously fall back on those experiences in my life.”

Sherilyn Narker, who won two medals in regional competition in 1987-88 in New York, sponsored a team from Druid Hills High School in Atlanta, Georgia. As a decathlete she was always interested in talking about ideas, so she sponsored a team to promote “the intellectual dialogue that goes on at practice.” Jared VanVleet, a 1991 decathlete from Gillette, Wyoming, now coaches the team from Noxon High School in Montana. When Jared was injured while playing sports, he joined the Decathlon Team, an activity which, he believes, changed his life. He said that his coach, Gary Winegar, “believed in me at a time when I didn’t think anyone else did.” He now has a junior member of his own team who feels the same way about Jared. Sarita Denny, who is a teacher at Chattahoochee County High School, was a decathlete her senior year at

Marion County High School, Georgia and her parents, Olin and Margie Holloman, were her coaches. She stated: “That one weekend (of competition) changed my perspective on the future. I attended college, became a teacher, and my first professional ambition was to coach a GAD team. I want to bring the exhilaration of learning and achievement that I experienced to my students.” Sarita and her parents are now friendly competitors.

The USAD continues to help enhance the educational experience for students, teachers, and communities. At the national competition in San Antonio in 2006, USAD President Robert Brezina initiated a round table discussion with selected decathletes. This discussion revealed that the Academic Decathlon experience gave the students a sense of camaraderie and team spirit. They learned organizational and test-taking skills and developed an even stronger work ethic. Only recently, a decathlon contestant commented: “Academic Decathlon has created within me a passion for learning that will last throughout my life.” This thought echoes a comment made by Decathlete Jeff Foust of Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1989: “Overall, I believe that I have gained more from my Academic Decathlon team experience than from the rest of my overall high school experience. While I fear I may be oversimplifying everything, I can say that I learned how to learn from ACADEC. What I gained from this I will carry with me not only through college, but through my entire life.” In 2007, Kevin Williams, captain of the Hamden Hall High School Team from Connecticut and Varsity member for four years, stated: “The most important part of ACADEC has been bonding with my team all year, and at nationals meeting students from around the country with similar interests and social dynamics.” Little did Robert Peterson realize, as he sat in his German POW camp more than sixty years ago, that his dream for a “decathlon of studies” would inspire so many students to intellectual and academic achievement through team competition.

VISION REALIZED

Hopefully, anyone reading this historical perspective will better understand how the idea of a nationally known and respected academic competition for young people was born from the ponderings of an imprisoned military aviator. His dream brought about the organization that helped create the competition and make it a positive contributor to the quality of education in the United States.

The pages that follow contain information from USAD's archives reflecting not only the competing and victorious students and coaches, but also the small, incredibly industrious executives of the organization, all volunteer members of the Board of Directors. Additionally, listed are the individuals and organizations whose generosity and support across the years has helped to make this organization and competition vital, strong, and meaningful to the lives of so many youthful competitors over the years.

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APPENDICES

ORANGE COUNTY ACADEMIC DECATHLON (OCAD)

Was founded in 1968 by Dr. Robert D. Peterson, Orange County Superintendent of Schools. 103 high school students from 22 public and private schools took part at Bolsa Grande High School, Garden Grove, CA.

First Sponsors: Assisting through financial and managerial support

Alpha Beta Markets

Autonetics

Bullocks

Chevron Oil Field Research Co.

Disneyland

General Telephone Co.

Hughes Ground Systems

The Irvine Company

KNOB Radio

Pacific Telephone Co.

J. C. Penney Co., Inc.

Philco-Ford Corporation

Newport National Bank

Sears-Roebuck

Signal Oil and Gas Co.

Southern California Edison Co.

Southern California Gas Co.

Union Oil Co. of California

Earliest Winners:

1968	Foothill High School
1969	Anaheim High School
1970	Los Alamitos High School, Rosary High Catholic School
1971	El Modena High School
1972	Villa Park High School
1973	Villa Park High School
1974	Orange High School
1975	Costa Mesa High School
1976	Troy High School
1977	University High School
1978	Esperanza High School

CALIFORNIA ACADEMIC DECATHLON (CAD)

Established in 1979. Twenty-three counties participated, and it was held at Chapman College, Orange, CA

First CAD Officers

Chairman of the Board of Trustees
President
Vice President

Secretary
Treasurer
Founder

Executive Director

R. Parker Sullivan
Dolores Diehl, Pacific Telephone
Donald R. Rudkin, Deloitte Haskins and Sells
Michael Spitzer, Arthur Andersen & Co.
Judith Shane, 7 Up Bottling Co.
Dr. Robert D. Peterson, Superintendent, Orange County Department of Education
Donald L. Primrose

Sponsoring Companies

Air California
Alpha Beta Company
Arthur Andersen & Co.
Atlantic Richfield
Bank of America
Beckman Instruments, Inc.
The Bekins Company
California Federal
Carl's Jr. Restaurants
Carnation Company
Chevron U.S.A., Inc.
Coast Federal Savings
Datsun
Deloitte Haskins and Sells
Fluidmaster, Inc.
Fluor Corporation
General Dynamics
General Telephone
Getty Oil Company
Gramercy Enterprises
Great Western Financial
Home Federal Savings of San Diego
Knott's Berry Farm
The Lear Siegler Foundation

Los Angeles Herald Examiner
Mattel
Mervyn's
Montgomery Ward Northrop Corp.
Pacific Mutual Life
Pacific Telephone
Riverside Community Foundation
Rockwell International
Sears, Roebuck and Co.
Security Pacific Charitable Fdn.
Seven Up Bottling Companies
Southern California Gas
State Mutual Savings
Teledyne, Inc.
Ticor Foundation
Times Mirror
Toyota Motor Sales, Inc.
TRW Systems & Energy
Union Bank
United California Bank
Walt Disney Productions
Western Airlines
Xerox

**UNITED STATES ACADEMIC DECATHLON (USAD)
Founded 1982**

FOUNDERS:

**Dr. Robert Peterson
Dr. Alex Aloia
Phillip G. Bardos
Robert Broaddus
Kristin Caperton
Millard Foist
Max Hammond
Wade Hampton**

**Robert Lamson
Donald R. McLean
Goldy Norton
William B. Patton, Jr.
Dr. Paul Possemato
Suzanne Eisler Roberts
Robert Sampieri
William H. Webber**

FIRST BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Dr. Robert Peterson, Founder*
Phillip G. Bardos, Chairman of the Board*
William B. Patton, Jr., President*
Robert W. Lamson, Vice President
Max Hammond, Secretary*
Donald R. McLean, Chief Financial Officer*
Dr. Alex D. Aloia*
Robert Broaddus
Suzanne Eisler
Millard F. Foist*
Beverly Froelich
Wade Hampton
Dr. Joseph P. Linscomb
Richard A. Littlestone
Goldy Norton
Dr. Al Perez*
Dr. Paul M. Possemato
Robert Sampieri
William H. Weber**

Jack Peterson served as Attorney for the Board (wrote first by-laws)

***Start up board – 1980 (according to Phillip G. Bardos)**

FIRST BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Harry G. Bubb, President
Pacific Mutual Life Insurance Company

Daniel W. Derbes
President, The Signal Companies

Robert R. Dockson
Chairman & Chief Executive
California Federal Savings & Loan

Thomas E. Drohan
President and Chief Executive
Foremost-McKesson, Inc.

Gerald Jennings
Chairman and Chief Executive
Everest & Jennings, Inc.

William Jorgenson
President, Ward Foods

Robert A. Kleckner
Executive Partner, Alexander Grant & Co.

J. Robert Meserve
Senior Partner
Meserve, Mumper & Hughes

C. Ridley Rhind
Vice President, Ampex

Carl L. Sadler
Chairman and Chief Executive
Rohr Industries, Inc.

Elwood Springer
President, Calistoga Mineral Water Company

CORPORATIONS SUPPORTING THE FIRST AWARDS LUNCHEON

**Alexander Grant & Co.
Ampex Corporation
ARA Services, Inc.
Beverly Enterprises
Bullocks/Bullocks Wilshire
Carl Karcher Enterprises
Community Bank
Davry Davidson
Everest & Jennings, Inc.
Fireman's Fund Insurance Co.
Fluidmaster, Inc.
Foremost-McKesson, Inc.
General Telephone Co. of CA**

**J. C. Penny Co.
Mattel, Inc.
Meserve, Mumper & Hughes
Pacific Mutual Life Insurance
Pacific Telephone
Dr. Robert Peterson
Pro-Vita Corporation
Torr Vacuum Products, Inc.
Trans World Insurance
Twentieth Century-Fox Film
Val Cheks, Inc.
Vidal Sassoon, Inc.
Ward-Johnston Co.**

OTHER BENEFACTORS OF THE FIRST NATIONAL COMPETITION

**Ampex Corporation
CA Parents-Teachers Association
Distribution Services West
Glendale Federal Savings & Loan
William F. Hooper, Inc.
Los Angeles Unified School Dist.
Loyola-Marymount University**

**Lawry's Foods, Inc.
Meserve, Mumper & Hughes
Orange County Dept. of Ed.
Pacific Mutual Insurance Co.
Seiko Time Corporation
Twentieth Century-Fox Film
Walt Disney Productions**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

1984-1987	Dr. Alfonso Perez
1988-1995	Ann Joynt
1995-2001	Dr. James Alvino
2001-2015	Dr. Les Martisko (Administrative Consultant)
2015-Present	Dr. Les Martisko (CEO)

PERSONNEL

Terry McKiernan, Curriculum Director
February 1999-Present

Daniele Grigsby, Testing Director
January 2000-Present

USAD PRESIDENTS

1982-83	William B. Patton, Jr.	Phillip G. Bardos, Chairman
1984-86	William B. Patton, Jr.	Robert Broaddus, Chairman
1987	A. Robert Paltiel	Robert Broaddus, Chairman
1987-89	John S. Peterson	Robert Broaddus, Chairman
1989-91	Bruce Ferguson	
1991-93	Jill Von Delden	
1993-95	John Foley	
1995-96	Rogg Collins	
1996-98	Dr. Kenneth Phillips	
1998-00	Dr. Arnold Oates	
2000-03	Franklin Wurtzel	
2003-05	Dr. E. Arthur Stunard	
2005-12	Robert Brezina	
2012-14	Joseph Jones	
2014-15	Nadine Kujawa	
2015-22	David Mikkalson	
2022-Present	Keith Wenner	

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

Dr. Kanwar Habib Khan
President and CEO
International Academy for Social Development
2014-2019

USAD
P.O. Box 4351
Mankato, MN 56002
2019-Present

USAD NATIONAL COMPETITIONS

Competition	Host	Super Quiz Topic/Theme	Teams
1981-1982	Los Angeles, CA		18
1982-1983	Los Angeles, CA	Super Quiz: The Housing Crisis	27
1983-1984	Los Angeles, CA	Super Quiz: The Olympics	30
1984-1985	Los Angeles, CA	Super Quiz: Futurism Megatrends	34
1985-1986	Los Angeles, CA	Super Quiz: Immigration	41
1986-1987	Irving, TX	Super Quiz: We the People: The Constitution of the United States	38
1987-1988	San Antonio, TX	Super Quiz: The History of Flight: From Daedalus to Kitty Hawk to Voyager	38
1988-1989	Providence, RI	Super Quiz: The U.S. Presidency	38
1989-1990	Des Moines, IA	Super Quiz: American Indians: Our American Heritage	39
1990-1991	Los Angeles, CA	Super Quiz: Space Exploration	45
1991-1992	Boise, Idaho	Super Quiz: Habitat Earth	48
1992-1993	Phoenix, AZ	Super Quiz: A Diversity of Achievers	44
1993-1994	Newark, NJ	Super Quiz: Documents of Freedom	42
1994-1995	Chicago, IL	Super Quiz: Biotechnology: The Next Frontier	39
1995-1996	Atlanta, GA	Theme: Competition and Cooperation Super Quiz: The United Nations	38

Competition	Host	Super Quiz Topic/Theme	Teams
1996-1997	St. George, UT	Theme: Communication and Culture Super Quiz: The Information Revolution	37
1997-1998	Providence, RI	Theme: Looking Outward Super Quiz: Globalization: The New Economy	38
1998-1999	Anaheim, CA	Theme: Looking Inward Super Quiz: The Brain	38
1999-2000	San Antonio, TX	Theme: Looking Forward: Creating the Future Super Quiz: Sustainable Earth	40
2000-2001	Anchorage, AK	Theme: Understanding the Self Super Quiz: Concepts of the Self: Psychology, Philosophy and Religion	37
2001-2002	Phoenix, AZ	Theme: Understanding Others Super Quiz: E-Communication: The Internet and Society	38
2002-2003	Erie, PA	Theme: Understanding the Natural World Super Quiz: The Blue Planet---Beneath the Surface (Oceanography)	38
2003-2004	Boise, ID	Theme: America: The Growth of A Nation Super Quiz: The Lewis and Clark Expedition	41
2004-2005	Chicago, IL	Theme: Exploring the Ancient World Super Quiz: Astronomy---From Empty Space to Incredible Universe: The Sky is Not the Limit	39
2005-2006	San Antonio, TX	Theme: The European Renaissance Super Quiz: The European Renaissance: Renewal and Reform	39

Competition	Host	Super Quiz Topic/Theme	Teams
2006-2007	Honolulu, HI	Theme: China and Its Influence On the World Super Quiz: An Introduction to Climatology	39
2007-2008	Garden Grove, CA	Theme: The Civil War Super Quiz: The Civil War	41
2008-2009	Memphis, TN	Theme: Latin America Super Quiz: An Introduction to Evolutionary Biology	37
2009-2010	Omaha, NE	Theme: The French Revolution Super Quiz: The French Revolution	36
2010-2011	Charlotte, NC	Theme: The Great Depression Super Quiz: An Introduction to Geology	36
2011-2012	Albuquerque, NM	Theme: The Age of Empire Super Quiz: The Age of Imperialism: The Making of a European Global Order	32
2012-2013	Minneapolis, MN	Theme: Russia	53*
2013-2014	Honolulu, HI	Theme: World War I	51**
2014-2015	Garden Grove, CA	Theme: New Alternatives in Energy: Ingenuity and Innovation	46***
2015-2016	Anchorage, AK	Theme: India	48****
2016-2017	Madison, WI	Theme: World War II	51*****
2017-2018	Frisco, TX	Theme: Africa	72*****
2018-19	Minneapolis, MN	Theme: The 1960s: A Transformational Decade	73*****
2019-20	Anchorage, AK	Theme: In Sickness and in Health: An Exploration of Illness and Wellness	
CANCELED			
2020-21	Virtual Nationals	Theme: The Cold War	41*****

2021-22	Virtual Nationals	Theme: Water: A Most Essential Resource 45*****
2022-23	Frisco, TX	Theme: The American Revolution and The New Nation 55*****
2023-24	Pittsburgh, PA	Theme: Technology and Humanity

***In 2012-2013, seventeen states hosted two teams, and one team was comprised of individual participants.**

****In 2013-14, fourteen states hosted two teams, one team was from London, UK and three teams were comprised of students from the People’s Republic of China.**

*****In 2014-15, there were eleven teams from the People’s Republic of China and two teams from London, UK.**

******In 2015-16, there were thirteen teams from the People’s Republic of China, two teams from London, UK, and one team from Canada.**

*******In 2016-17, there were fifteen teams from the People’s Republic of China, two from the United Kingdom, and two from Canada.**

*******In 2017-18, thirty-two states each hosted one team. Seventeen state teams participated in Division IV. There were twenty teams from the People’s Republic of China, and three teams from the United Kingdom.**

*******In 2018-19, thirty-one states each hosted one team. Nineteen state teams participated in Division IV. There were twenty-one teams from the People’s Republic of China, and two teams from the United Kingdom.**

In 2019-20, the National Competition was cancelled.

*******In 2020-21, the National Competition was held virtually. Nine states competed in Division I, eight states competed in Division II, nine states competed in Division III, and 15 states competed in Division IV.**

*******In 2021-22, the National Competition was held virtually. Ten states competed in Division I, nine states competed in Division II, nine states competed in Division III, and seventeen states competed in Division IV.**

In 2022-23, nine states competed in Division I, nine states competed in Division II, nine states competed in Division III. Twenty-eight states competed in Division IV for a total of 55 Teams.

USAD NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

1982	CALIFORNIA, Palo Alto High School
1983	CALIFORNIA, Palo Alto High School
1984	TEXAS, J.J. Pearce High School
1985	TEXAS, J.J. Pearce High School
1986	TEXAS, J.J. Pearce High School
1987	CALIFORNIA, John Marshall High School
1988	TEXAS, J.J. Pearce High School
1989	CALIFORNIA, William Howard Taft High School
1990	TEXAS, Lake Highlands High School
1991	TEXAS, J. J. Pearce High School
1992	TEXAS, J. Frank Dobie High School
1993	TEXAS, Plano East High School
1994	CALIFORNIA, William Howard Taft High School
1995	CALIFORNIA, John Marshall High School
1996	TEXAS, J. Frank Dobie High School
1997	TEXAS, James E. Taylor High School
1998	CALIFORNIA, El Camino Real High School
1999	CALIFORNIA, Moorpark High School
2000	TEXAS, James E. Taylor High School
2001	CALIFORNIA, El Camino Real High School
2002	WISCONSIN, Waukesha West High School
2003	CALIFORNIA, Moorpark High School

2004 CALIFORNIA, El Camino Real High School

2005 CALIFORNIA, El Camino Real High School

2006 CALIFORNIA, William Howard Taft High School

2007 CALIFORNIA, El Camino Real High School

2008 CALIFORNIA, Moorpark High School

2009 CALIFORNIA, Moorpark High School

2010 CALIFORNIA, El Camino Real High School

2011 CALIFORNIA, Granada Hills Charter High School

2012 CALIFORNIA, Granada Hills Charter High School

2013 CALIFORNIA, Granada Hills Charter High School

2014 CALIFORNIA, El Camino Real High School

2015 CALIFORNIA, Granada Hills Charter High School

2016 CALIFORNIA, Granada Hills Charter High School

2017 CALIFORNIA, Granada Hills Charter High School

2018 CALIFORNIA, El Camino Real High School

2019 CALIFORNIA, Granada Hills Charter High School

2020 COMPETITION CANCELED

2021 CALIFORNIA, Granada Hills Charter High School

2022 CALIFORNIA, Granada Hills Charter High School

2023 CALIFORNIA, El Camino Real Charter High School

HIGHEST SCORING TEAMS AT USAD* (1986-2023)

State	Times in Top Ten	Times in Top Five	Times in Top Three
Alabama	9	1	
Alaska	3		
Arizona	36	26	11
California	37	37	35
Colorado	1		
Georgia	2		
Hawaii	4		
Idaho	2		
Illinois	35	28	11
Indiana	4		
Iowa	17	2	
Louisiana	1		
Maine	1		
Massachusetts	26	9	
Minnesota	5	2	
Mississippi	5		
Nebraska	8	2	2
New Jersey	12	4	
New Mexico	2		
New York	3		
Ohio	24	12	7
Oklahoma	3	1	
Pennsylvania	14		
Rhode Island	7	1	
Tennessee	8		
Texas	37	35	30
Utah	4		
Virginia	1		
Wisconsin	36	18	12
Texas "B"	4	2	
California "B"	4	1	1
Arizona "B"	2		

*****Based on overall team scores, not by regions, or size categories.***

In 2013, seventeen states hosted two teams.

In 2014, fourteen states hosted two teams.

In 2019, nineteen states hosted two teams.

In 2020, competition was canceled.

In 2021, fifteen states hosted two teams.

In 2022, seventeen states hosted two teams.

In 2023, eighteen states hosted two teams.

USAD STATE DIRECTORS – 1984-2023

*The compilation is taken from study guides, competition handbooks, and awards programs, and may not be complete. **Directors who have served 10+ years.*

ALABAMA:

Mildred Enfinger:	1985-86
Marian Loftin:	1986-91
Dale Hill:	1991-92
David Stearn:	1992-94
L. Holt Cloud:	1994-98

ALASKA:

Dr. Gladys R. Foris:	1985-92
Audrey Meyer:	1987-88
Karen Kroon:	1992-97
Bonnie Head:	1997-2002
Anne Yutrzenka:	2002-05
Curtis Clifton**:	2005-2021
Joan Pardes:	2021-Present

ARIZONA:

Hal Buckley:	1984-85
Anita Lohr**:	1984-96
Paul Street:	1992-93
James Curlett:	1994-95
Cathleen Condren:	1996-97
Sylvia Udall:	1997-06
Anne Edelstein**:	2006-2021
Sarah Morris:	2021-Present

ARKANSAS:

Michael J. Moran:	1984-85
Brenda Matthews:	1985-89
Carol Brody:	1997-2006

CALIFORNIA:

Dick Nagle:	1984-85
Don Primrose:	1985-86, 86-87, 87-88
Ann Joynt:	1988-89, 89-90
Judy Combs**:	1990-2002
Marvin Cobb:	2002-05
Ken Scarberry**:	2005-Present

COLORADO:

Duane Nelson:	1984-85
Dan Ryan:	1985-87
Don Ihrke:	1987-90
Jenny Joslin:	1990-91
Kay Lorenz:	1991-92
Bryce Snyder:	1992-94
Bill Callahan:	1994-97
Launa Garton:	1997-2001
Jeanette Bishop:	2001-05
Stan May:	2005-07
Paul Branum:	2017-2023
Tara Goebel:	2023-Present

CONNECTICUT:

Thomas Brown:	1985-87
John Elliott:	1987-89
Jack Molloy:	1989-91
William Coan:	1991-95
Howard Lohr:	1995-98
Jennifer Tebbs:	1999-2004
Aja LaDuke:	2004-09
Sebastian Garza:	2017-Present

DELAWARE:

Kristina M. Swain:	1985-86, 1987-89
Gregory Meese:	1986-87
Peggy Dee:	1991-94

WASHINGTON, D.C.:

Dorothy Hampton:	1984-85
Doris Trabue:	1990-92
Annabelle Strayhorn:	1992-95
Dr. K. Habib Khan	2013-14
Naveed Khan	2015-19

FLORIDA:

Beverly Everett:	1984-90
Peggy Cole/Ron Davis:	1990-92
Bill Pelaia:	1997-98
Judy Edsal:	1998-2001
Karen Wikman:	2004-07
Laura Springstroh:	2007-2015

GEORGIA:

Howard Stroud: 1985-92
Tom Wommack: 1992-98
Dr. Ruth Cowan:** 1996-2006
Cary Sell:** 2006-2017
Michelle Crawford: 2017-Present

HAWAII:

Robert Whiting: 1984-85
Margaret Oda: 1986-87
Joan Yanagi: 1991-94, 1996-98
Becky Moneymaker: 1994-96, 1998-2004
Charlene Masuhara: 2004-06
Anne Miller: 2006-2011
Cindy Martisko: 2013-Present

IDAHO:

David Steadman: 1984-88
Jerry Helgeson:** 1988-2015
Mary Bird: 2015-2022
Nick Hoffman: 2022-Present

ILLINOIS:

Randy Wortman: 1984-89
Marsha Bollendorf: 1989-90
Roger Prietz: 1990-92
Frances Holliday:** 1992-2004
Linda Pierzchalski: 2004-09
Joyce Swenson: 2017-18
Dave Chiszar: 2018-2023
Tammy Raffen: 2023-Present

INDIANA:

Paul Schuyler: 1984-91
Gerald Kolter: 1991-97
Rick Russ: 1997-2002
Kyle Harrop:** 2002-2018
Abby Warren: 2019-2020
Cameron Clark: 2020-2023
Rusty King: 2023-Present

IOWA:

Dick Wiederhold:** 1985-95
Linda Fernandez: 1995-2000
Robert Tesar: 2000-02
Cheryl Osterhaus: 2002-03
Harvey Kimble: 2003-2012
Jolene Teske:** 2012-Present

KANSAS:

Charles O. Stones: 1984-85
Rosemary Moran: 1991-98
Diane Hansen:** 1998-2008
Megan Clark: 2008-2011
Shelley Vittorino:** 2011-Present

KENTUCKY:

Anne Crockett: 1984-85
Amanda Brown: 1985-86, 1987-89
Mary Buckalew: 1986-87
Ted Brown: 1992-96
Diane Calhoun-French: 1996-2004
Janet Morris: 2006-09

LOUISIANA:

Riley Bratton: 1984-85
Laura Amberson: 1985-87
Cynthia Martin: 1987-90
Susan Smith: 1990-91
Barbara Gillis: 1991-92
Robert Sawyer: 1992-94
Kathy Plante: 1995-2001
Andy Benoit:** 2001-2013

MAINE:

Peter Greer: 1985-86
Shirley Grover: 1986-87
David Brown: 1987-90
Ron Moody: 1990-94
Paul Pendleton: 1994-97
Michael Richards: 1997-2005
David Heckman:** 2005-2018
Mark Larkin: 2018-2019
David Heckman: 2019-2021
Pam Smith: 2021-Present

MARYLAND:

Douglas Norwood: 1984-89
Deborah Bellflower: 1997-98
Habib Khan: 2013-2014
Sebastian Garza: 2017-Present

MASSACHUSETTS:

Henry Lukas:** 1984-2008
Michael Tempesta: 2008-10
Paul Thorp: 2010-2014
Steven Noble: 2014-2015
Sebastian Garza: 2015-Present

MICHIGAN:

Luala O’Neal: 1986-87
Tim Quinn: 1991-92
Kathy Foley:** 1992-2003
Mark Rudd: 2003-09
David Squires 2009-10

MINNESOTA:

David Stead: 1984-85
Carol Ackerson: 1985-87
Deanna Steele: 1987-92
Dr. Les Martisko: 1992-2000
Kate Martens: 2000-01
Wanda Sommers-Wall: 2001-10
Joyce Swenson and 2010-2011
Wanda Somers-Wall:
Joyce Swenson*: 2011-2021
Amy Dosch: 2021-Present

MISSISSIPPI:

Ralph Brewer: 1984-85
Ted J. Alexander: 1985-86
Vi Gunn: 1986-87
Buddy Wagner: 1987-96
Caroline Herring: 1997-98
Lynne Geller: 1998-2001
Suzanne Teel: 2002-03
Shanda Barrett: 2004-06
LaTasha (Grayson) Bibb: 2006-08
Anne McCauley: 2008-10
Justin Phillips: 2010-2011

MISSOURI:

Bill Heyde:	1984-89
Grace McReynolds:	1990-91
Randy Wortman:	1991-92
Gary Phelps:	1992-94
Carla Holmes:	1995-96
Roy Copeland:	2013-Present

MONTANA:

Sid Wilson:	1984-87
Rich Wilson:	1991-94

NEBRASKA:

Judy Henning:	1984-86
John Anstey**:	1986-2015
Jim Barstow	2015-2017
Dr. John Kyndt and Brian Kear	2017-2018
Dr. John Anstey:	2018-2020
Vicki Deniston Reed:	2020-Present

NEVADA:

Niles Boyles:	1984-85, 1986-87
Marvin Moss:	1985-86
Larry Mason:	1990-91

NEW HAMPSHIRE:

Walter Borkowski**:	1985-95
Jeff Quinn:	1995-96
Rodney Mansfield:	1998-2001
Norman Katz:	2002-09

NEW JERSEY:

I.L. Roy Stern:	1985-87
John Geissenger:	1987-90
William Cobb:	1990-94
Jerry Murphy:	1994-99
Mario Volpe:	1999-02
Lisa Martone:	2002-08
Glenn Koegel:**	2008-2019
Kathy D'Andrea:	2019-Present

NEW MEXICO:

Don Noe:	1984-85
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Mary Nebgen:	1985-87
Yvonne Kauffman:	1987-89
Toni Martorelli:	1989-92
Karen Honeycutt:	1992-2001
Eric Maddy:	2001-02
David Sheriff:	2002-04
Karen Kinsman:	2004-10
Leslie Keeney	2010-2012
Jerry Helgeson	2015-2016

NEW YORK:

Joseph Sproule:	1984-89
Nancy Lederer:	1989-96
Steve Saya:	1997-2001
Carol Yohannes:	2001-04
Maggie Burtwell:	2004-08
Barry Jones*:	2008-Present

NORTH CAROLINA:

Daniel A. Cockman:	1985-89
Jerry Kasperek:	1989-90
Riley Bratton:	1990-92
Sonya Lyda:	1992-95
Robert Peterson:	1995-2001
Ann Hooker:	2001-02
Flo Durway:	2002-04
Jennifer Falk:	2004-09

NORTH DAKOTA:

Vern Bennet:	1986-87
Kathy Hawken:	1992-95
John Antsey:	2013-2015

OHIO:

C.A. (Al) Zimmerman:	1984-87
James Costanza:	1987-89
William T. Hiller:	1989-90
Bill Kraus:	1990-92
Harriet Bush:	1992-98
John Beale**:	1998-2008
James Krancevik:	2008-2011
Joshua Reichard:	2011-2014
Judy Shrefler:	2014-2017
Jennifer Orr:	2017-2018
Laura Hart:	2018-2019

Dan Janning:	2019-2020
Sabrina Neeley:	2020-2021
Susan Ayres:	2021-Present

OKLAHOMA:

Jerry Moon:	1984-85
Ivalene Neptune:	1985-94
Donna Wade:	1994-95
Guy Sconzo:	1995-97, 1998-2003
Saundra Vallejo:	1997-98
Patty Neuwirth**:	2003-2015
Shep Pamplin:	2015-2017

OREGON:

Bonnie Nalley:	1985-89
William Lakes:	1989-90, 90-01, 91-92
Joan Robbins:	1992-95
Robert Bernhard:	1998-2004
Christian Cerone:	2007-09
Jerry Helgeson:	2013-2016

PENNSYLVANIA:

David Emery**:	1985-97
Gus Picardo**:	1996-2008
Michelle Schroeder and Joey Duke	2008-2011
Michelle Buchanan**:	2011-Present

RHODE ISLAND:

Jim Montague:	1984-87
John Howell:	1987-91
Judy Edsal:	1989-97
Pat Lehnertz**:	1997-2010
Sue Melaragno:	2010-2016
Mary Johnson:	2016-2017
Frank Lenox:	2017-Present

SOUTH CAROLINA:

John T. Harlee:	1985-87
Malcolm Doubles:	1987-91
Neal Martin:	1991-98
Joseph P. Clarke:	1999-2003
Peter Sederberg:	2003-06
Davis Baird:	2006-08
Beth Oliver:	2008-2011

Kevin Kirkley: 2012-2017

SOUTH DAKOTA:

Sue Hendricks: 1986-87
John Christiansen: 1991-92
Shirley Peterson: 1992-95
John Anstey: 2013-2015

TENNESSEE:

Lynne Jordan: 1985-89
James Swain: 1989-98
Cindy Fagan: 1989-2001
Emory Register: 2001-02, 2003-09
Susan Scott-Wilson: 2002-03
Brenda Ables: 2008-2011
Linda Swope: 2011-2012
Trent Weaver: 2012-2014
Charlotte Woehler: 2014-2023
Eddie Keel: 2023-Present

TEXAS:

Winston Power, Jr.: 1984-85
Charles Christesson, Jr.: 1984-85
C. Lee Meyer: 1985-2000**
Sue Edwards: 1999-2016**
Rick Hopkins: 2016-Present

UTAH:

Carla Brooks*: 1984-99
Barbara Hanson: 1999-2002
Ed Rogers: 2002-2014**
Linda Morrison: 2014-2020
**Greg Hansen and
Stacie Whitford: 2020-21**
Stacie Whitford: 2021-Present

VERMONT:

Jackie Murphy: 1990-91
Steve Houghton: 1992-94

VIRGINIA.:

Jim Wilson: 1984-85
Cranston Rogers II: 1989-90
Robert Marshall: 1990-92
Charles Fischer: 1992-94
Warren Stewart: 1995-96
Claude Sandy: 1996-2003
Dr. K. Habib Khan: 2013-14

Naveed Khan 2015-2019

WASHINGTON:

Larry Norwood: 1983-86, 1987-91
Tom Kelleher: 1986-87, 1992-95
Dick Kistler: 1991-92
Robert Sahr: 1996-98
Raymond Harry: 1998-2001
Vicki Lee: 2001-09
Jerry Helgeson: 2013-2017

WEST VIRGINIA:

Connie Strickland: 1985-92
Cheryl McVay: 1992-94
Brent Kober: 1994-95
Michelle Schroeder: 2013-16

WISCONSIN:

James Kroll: 1984-85
Arnold Chandler: 1985-86
Jim Nys: 1986-89
Richard Terry: 1989-90
Meg Olejniczak: 1990-99, 2000-01
Sharon Van Den Heuvel: 1999-2000
Molly Ritchie*: 2001-2017**
Janelle Bailey: 2017-2022
Amanda Albrecht: 2022-Present

WYOMING:

Charles Wing: 1984-85
Sharon Anderson: 1985-86
Kathleen Ragan: 1986-89
Robert Neeb: 1989-90
Greg Tatham: 1990-92
Mohammed Waheed: 1992-94
Karl Bear: 1994-96
Cathy Marine: 1996-2003
Joy Badwound: 2003-04
Denise Marquiss: 2004-06
Maureen Ryff: 2006-2015
Elissa Ruckle: 2015-2022

CANADA:

Aileen Munro: 1989-92
ConnieMcCabe: 1993-94
Jon Gale: 1994-95

David Heckman	2016-2018	
Mary Heers	2008-2009	
Jerry Helgeson	1994-1996; 2010-2014	
Stephanie Sartain Herrera	2001-2011	Leave of Absence
Gary Hinsche	1997-2001	
Eugene R. Hoffman	1984-1987	
Don Hymel	2005-2008	
Joseph D. Johnson	1986-1992	
Joseph Jones	2004 -2014	
Ann B. Joynt	1988-1995	Executive Director
Don Kano	1994-1995	
Dr. James Kelley	2004-2011	
Nadine Kujawa	2008-2015	
George Kremer	1986-1987	
Robert W. Lamson	1982-1986	
David B. Lang	1995-1996	
Dr. Joseph P. Linscomb	1982-1983	
Brigitte Lindstrom	2004-2008	
Richard A. Littlestone	1982	
Dr. Pam Lloyd	2011-Present	
Anita Lohr	1988-2014	Emeritus
Tim Lowe	2001-2003	
Henry Lukas	1992-1994	
Dr. Les Martisko	1995-Present	Executive Director/CEO
Brian Mayhew	1998-2002	
Lidia Li Maylath	2018-Present	
William McFarlin	1987-1992	
Donald R. McLean	1982-1985	
Dr. C. Lee Meyer	1991-1992, 2002-2003	
Dave Mikkalson	2006-Present	
Carmen Mitchell (Howes)	1983-1986	
Nelson Mitchell	1996-2015	
John J. Moeling, Jr.	1991-1994	
Debbie Murmylo	2010-2011	
Dr. Barbara Aranda-Naranjo	2022-Present	
Dr. William H. Nault	1984-1986	
Goldy Norton	1982	
Robert Novell	1985-1986	
Dr. Arnold Oates	1990-1998; 2000-Present	Emeritus
Kevin Olson	1997-1999	
A. Robert Paltiel	1984-1990	
Richard Parker	2001-2003	
William B. Patton, Jr.	1982-1987	
Mercedes V. Paxton	2005-Present	
Dr. Alfonso B. Perez	1982-2010	Executive Director
Jack S. Peterson	1986-2021	
Dr. Robert Peterson	1982-2004	Founder
Dr. Kenneth Phillips	1994-2001	

Gus Picardo	2001-2008	
Dr. Paul Possemato	1982-1983;	(Board of Trustees 1983-87);
	1991-Present	Emeritus
Alan Pound	1995-1996	
Winston C. Power, Jr.	1985-1990	
Asa Reaves, Esq.	1995-2016	Emeritus
Franklin Reinauer II	1986-2009	Emeritus
Michael Richards	1998-2002	
Barry Roberts	2002-2004	
Suzanne Eisler Roberts	1982-2022	Emeritus
Robert Sampieri	1982-1985	
Angie Schendt	2009-2010	
Cary Sell	2011-2016	
Frann Shermet	1992-2000	Executive Coordinator
Dr. Gail Siller	2001-2007	Emeritus
John Skipper	1992-1995	
Dr. David Steadman	1987-1988	
William A. Straughan	1986-1989	
Dr. E. Arthur Stunard	1994-Present	Emeritus
Robert Suarez	1987-1995	
Cynthia Swetnam	2010-2011	
Dr. Brian Talbott	2010-Present	
Dr. Jolene Teske	2016-Present	
Michelle Thomas	1999-2004	
MelloDee Thornton	1996-1998	
Linda Tucker-Harris	1992-1995	
John Varner III	2000-2003	
Jill von Deldon	1990-1996	
Dr. Joan Wade	2017-Present	
William H. Weber	1982-1986	
Keith Wenner	2014-Present	
Jasani Whitehead	2021-Present	
Franklin R. Wurtzel	1989-2019	
Dr. Robert Zeigler	2006-08	
Dr. Sally Ann Zoll	1997-2014	
Carol Zuniga	1998-2006	

**Dates taken from study guides—may have some inaccuracies.*

USAD CORPORATE SPONSORS

(for one or more years between 1982 and 2023)

AESA	Intel Foundation
American Airlines	International Academy for Social Development
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Ampex Corp.	Lennox Industries, Inc.
Atlantic Richfield	Loeb&Loeb LLP
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Blue Shield of CA	Meserve, Mumpers & Hughes
Cado Systems	Motorola
California S&L	Northrup Grumman
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Cable in the Classroom	Point Zero
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DeVry Institute of Technology	Ronald McDonald
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Dollar General	Scientific American
Educational Measurements	Seiko Time Corporation
Educational Testing Service	Sourcewell
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Epson	Torr Vacuum
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Formost McKesson, Inc.	Woodmen of the World
GCI	World Book Inc.
Harcourt Brace	Xerox Corporation
HBO	
Hilton	
Home Savings of America	

****From the records of Dr. Alfonso Perez**

CURRENT SPONSORS

AESA	2017-Present
GCI	2012-Present
Loeb&Loeb	2003-Present
Norsoft Digital Solutions	2006-Present
South Central Service Cooperative	2013-Present
Sourcewell	2018-Present

HISTORY OF IDA

(International Decathlon for Academics)

In 1986, an historic satellite competition was held with four students from Foothill High School in Tustin, CA, pitted against four students from a school in northern Ireland. Software Ireland wanted to demonstrate what could be accomplished with teleconferencing technology. British Telecom produced the competition via satellite in cooperation with ARCO Corporation's Los Angeles Office. The final score was decided on the final question: Foothill 235, Ireland 222.5. As a result of this positive experience, Dr. Peterson formed a separate organization with the title International Decathlon for Academics. Papers of Incorporation were filed and IDA was adopted in 1990 in Costa Mesa, CA, the location of the second competition that same year. Nine students from Orange County's Laguna Hills High School competed against nine from King Edward VI School, in Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, England.

In 1991, a third international competition was conducted over two days via satellite television, matching students from London, Singapore, and New York. The first day was devoted to testing in the nine disciplines. London served as the "Master Venue" and the source for all questions. Questions were displayed simultaneously at each venue on a large screen as well as given verbally to the contestants. The second day scheduled the televising of the "Super Quiz" focusing on the "Global Environment".

On May 2, 1992, the Fourth IDA competition was held at Point Loma Nazarene College, San Diego, California. Countries competing included Argentina, Canada, Australia, England, Mexico, New Zealand, Turkey and the United States.

Although enthusiastically received by students and coaches, further financial and technological support did not materialize, and the IDA was forced to dissolve.

KRISTIN CAPERTON AWARD

Chairperson Suzanne Eisler Roberts has been instrumental in coordinating this award since its inception. Awardees include teams and individuals who have overcome personal and physical challenges and are inspirations to others. The initial winner was an alternate from Louisiana who walked door-to-door to solicit funds for his team. He did so in a body cast and on crutches. In 1997 all Decathlon participants nationwide were eligible for the award. That year a remarkable student with glioblastoma multiform brain tumor did not make the Nationals, so she was given a Special President's Award. The "surprise" element and support of the team at the national competition was missed so the State Directors requested a return to a winner being selected from the participants at the Nationals. Currently, however, two Caperton Awards are available each year for United States Decathletes participating at any level.

WINNERS OF THE KRISTIN CAPERTON AWARD

- 1984 *Christopher Scott, Louisiana.*
- 1985 *Samantha Ruth Rawlins, Delaware.*
- 1986 *The Team from Alaska.*
- 1987 *Kelly Griffith, Idaho.*
- 1988 *John Miller, Nebraska.*
- 1989 *Christopher Taylor, Rhode Island.*
- 1990 *Fred Klug, Wisconsin.*
- 1991 *The Team from Kansas.*
- 1992 *Rhondee Johnson, District of Columbia.*
- 1993 *Kevin Bigalow, New York.*
- 1994 *Brian Landrum, Indiana.*
- 1995 *Matthew Bowman, Colorado.*
- 1996 *Ana Ruzic, Kentucky.*

- 1997 *Laura Gipson, California.*
- 1998 *Levon Camp, Tennessee.*
- 1999 *Charlotte Lanvers, Utah.*
- 2000 *Corinne Schmitt, Colorado.*
- 2001 *John Mushat, Pennsylvania.*
- 2002 *Jess Burkle, Ohio.*
- 2003 *Jameson Lane Oxnard, Pennsylvania.*
- 2004 *Heather Bandy, California.*
- 2005 *Natalie Rivera, New Mexico.*
- 2006 *Joan King, Texas.*
- 2007 *Duncan Hardee, North Carolina.*
Christiana Mata, Washington.
- 2008 *Gordon Tahquechi, Oklahoma.*
Ryan Joe, Alaska.
- 2009 *Robert Dooling, Nebraska.*
Andrew Wai, Pennsylvania.
- 2010 *Melissa Corbett, South Carolina.*
Sara Rice, Nebraska.
- 2011 *Tyler Murphy, Ohio.*
Renita Buss, Nebraska.
- 2012 *Colby Wolfe, Georgia.*
Gary Lose, Alaska.
- 2013 *Kristian Robinson, Pennsylvania.*
Ryder May, Georgia.
- 2014 *Beatrice Braeuer, Maine.*
- 2015 *No award given.*
- 2016 *Raiden Domingo, Hawaii.*
- 2017 *Carlos Garcia, Wisconsin.*

2018 *Michael Timmerman, Nebraska.*

2019 *Keyrin Dutko, California*
Gwendolyn Miller, Illinois

2020 *Siani Booth, Arizona*
Alex Welshons, Minnesota

2021 *Julia Holdcroft, Nebraska*
Kate Lasko, Wisconsin

2022 *Levi Seymour, Texas*
Logan Williams, Idaho

2023 *Ellie Tavani, Georgia*
Sophie Walker, Arizona

COMMENTS BY
UNITED STATES PRESIDENTS



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
March 29, 1985

I am pleased to send warm greetings to those students and educators who are participating in the United States Academic Decathlon this week in Los Angeles. I understand nearly 300 students representing some 40 states are taking part in this unique academic competition.

I also extend my congratulations to the winners of this year's decathlon. However, it is clear that there are no losers. Each of you has excelled and should be proud to represent your various schools and communities.

America's strength depends on the continuing development of our young people's minds. USAD is a fine example of this, particularly since students at all academic levels are encouraged to participate in all phases of competition.

In addition, USAD demonstrates the importance of local communities taking the initiative to enhance the work of our educational systems. It is also encouraging to find that companies in the private sector, such as World Book, Inc, are enthusiastically joining in this effort.

I wish each of you great success as you continue your education and commend you for rising to the challenge of the United States Academic Decathlon.

Ronald Reagan

President Ronald Reagan
March 29, 1985

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 12, 1996

Warm greetings to everyone gathered in Atlanta, Georgia, for the National Finals of the United States Academic Decathlon.

As we stand on the threshold of the twenty-first century, our nation is faced with many challenges, and I firmly believe that education is the key to overcoming those challenges. It is through education that we learn to excel, that we are able to remain competitive, and that we are able to live in unity within our global environment. This year's theme, "Competition and Cooperation," reflects this principle, and you have proved its value by learning to work and study together while advancing the academic standards of American education.

I congratulate all the students participating in this year's event for the diligent study, hard work, and dedication that brought you to this level of competition. Our nation's young people are the next generation of leaders and thinkers, and as my Administration works to rebuild America, I am counting on you to act as role models for every student who has a desire to succeed.

Best wishes for an exciting decathlon and for every future success.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Clinton" with a long, sweeping flourish at the end.

President William Jefferson Clinton
April 12, 1996



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 17, 2001

I am pleased to send warm greetings to the 39 state championship teams and 16 small division winners attending the National Finals of the United States Academic Decathlon.

Participating in activities such as scholastic team competitions is an outstanding way to stretch your mind and to gain greater knowledge. Young people performing in such events learn discipline, focus, and teamwork. Those lessons can be very helpful to them in the classroom and in their future careers. I commend you for your commitment to excellence and dedication in earning a spot in the competition, and I encourage you to keep setting high goals as you prepare for new challenges ahead. I also salute your parents and instructors for their encouragement and support of your efforts.

Best wishes on this special occasion.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "G. W. Bush".

President George W. Bush
April 17, 2001

"America 2000 is a challenge posed to each of us - to literally reinvent American education. To reach deep within us to find answers - so that our kids can reach out to find the stars.

And that's why I am so proud of you as messengers of this idea. Your lives and your accomplishments speak to other kids the way no words from a government or even a teacher can. These kids look at each of you and they see themselves. They look at you and they see what they, too, can become.

And that's what a new kind of hero is. A new generation of heroes. With the good values you learn from disciplined determination. The sharp mind that's not wasted on drugs. The confidence and pride that come from stretching yourself, proving yourself. You're the ones who will help our America 2000 dream come true."

President George Herbert Walker Bush

Presidential Address

April 25, 1991

The White House



National Winners from Texas visit President George Herbert Walker Bush at the White House on April 23, 1992.

“The importance of this kind of pursuit of educational excellence cannot be overemphasized. We’re at a moment in our history when we have to increase the educational ability of all Americans; and in which it is not simply important how much our people know, but what they are capable of learning and how quickly and well they are capable of thinking through complex problems that may face them tomorrow but are even unpredictable today. Because of these kinds of challenges, we cannot meet our educational excellence goals through government mandates, we have to meet them through incentives and through environments which promote excellence and leadership from teachers and principals, the kind of group work that we see in this Academic Decathlon.”

*President William Jefferson Clinton
The Rose Garden
April 1993*