



NEWSLETTER

Coach Spotlight: Robert Ha, La Quinta High School

Alumni Words of Wisdom

"Academic Decathlon taught me how to read more critically, write more clearly, and think more rigorously about a wide range of disciplines. It taught me the value of grit, as my team and I fought together to achieve our common goals despite the different challenges that each event threw at us. But most important, it taught me to always love learning and to be open to new experiences - no matter how scary or difficult they seem."

**Kevin Li, UC San Diego,
Woodbridge HS class of 2016**

For more information about the Orange County Academic Decathlon, please visit:
www.ocde.us/decathlon

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Robert Ha, currently teaching English at La Quinta High School, is in his twelfth year of teaching. Eleven of those years (including this year) have also been spent serving students as an Academic Decathlon coach.

Early on in his teaching career, Robert was approached by the former La Quinta Academic Decathlon coach, Rob Weeg, with an opportunity to become the school's next coach. Looking to become more active on campus, Robert took the opportunity given to him to greater serve the students of La Quinta. Although a potentially overwhelming task, Weeg assured Robert that there was support from every direction – from Weeg himself and from the coordinators at the county competition. Eleven years later Robert has seen his program thrive and grow.

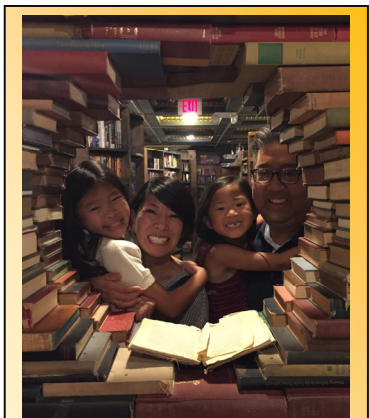
La Quinta high school has a growing list of accomplishments, including first place Division 3 during the 2011 Orange County Academic Decathlon (OCAD) competition; a first place in Division 2 and a high bid to state during the 2012 OCAD competition, and a top-five placement in Division 1 of the 2015 OCAD competition, which led to their most recent bid to the state competition where they placed third in the Super Quiz Relay for Division 3. There have been numerous highlights and successes for his teams and students, but there is one accomplishment in particular that keeps Robert going as a coach: winning the first place overall team award in the OCAD competition.

Robert's favorite memory from his team's listed accomplishments was the moment when they qualified for the state competition while competing in Division 2 of OCAD. He reminisces, "We thought we had a good chance of winning Division 2 but we were all surprised when the announcement was made that we were headed to Sacramento!"

Robert is a believer that the power of the OCAD program at his school goes beyond the impact of winning awards and individual medals. He states, "I love watching a student's confidence grow when they participate in Decathlon." Being a program that students can participate in every year during their high school career, Robert has witnessed several of his students join the team as early as their freshman or sophomore year and really blossom into their own by the time they are seniors. As an advocate for the program, Robert shared "Academic Decathlon is more than just studying. It's about social growth. It's about learning how to be part of a team and finding what your role is on that team."

Beyond teaching English and coaching Academic Decathlon, Robert enjoys spending time with his family exploring and adventuring around Los Angeles and during outings at Disneyland. He is also an avid University of Maryland basketball fan and he enjoys trying out new restaurants.

Thank you, Robert, for being the epitome of a leader, a gifted educator, and an inspiring Academic Decathlon coach!



Robert Ha (right) pictured with his family

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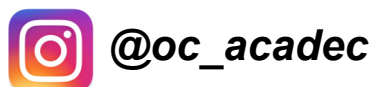
- Coach Spotlight: Robert Ha
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Orange County Academic Decathlon

*Invites You to Celebrate 50 years of
Academic Excellence with One Day of Service*

With One Day of Service you can help to create the space for our students to pursue their academic endeavors, build their communication skills, and engage with the community around them.

You make a difference in helping OCAD to achieve its mission to inspire academic excellence and build 21st century skills that prepare our students for college and careers.

If you enjoy working with young people, register as a volunteer judge and/or proctor and commit to One Day of Service with OCAD.

For general information about our volunteer opportunities, visit: <http://www.ocde.us/Decathlon/Pages/Volunteer-Information.aspx>

Interview or Speech



Interview or Speech Judge

January 27 2018 — Tustin High School

Registration: <http://day1ocad.eventbrite.com>



Test or Super Quiz

Classroom Test or Super Quiz Proctor

February 3, 2018 — Westminster High School

Registration: <http://day2ocad.eventbrite.com>

Be a Champion Donor for OCAD!

Your financial contributions directly reward student achievement. Donations and sponsorships support program enrichment and college scholarships for students, as well as registration fees and travel costs for the winning team to compete at the California Academic Decathlon competition. Last year, \$13,800 in college scholarships were awarded to 32 hard-working decathletes.

Donate \$50 to celebrate our 50th year and you could win two Disneyland® Resort Park-hopper tickets!

It's never too late to support the bright futures of our student decathletes! Anyone who donates by January 27, 2018, will receive special recognition on the OCAD website and in the awards ceremony program. Anyone who donates \$50 or more by February 9, 2018, will be entered into our raffle for two Disneyland Resort Park-hopper tickets. The winner will be announced at our awards ceremony in February and does not need to be present.

Pick an option below to donate!

Option 1: Donate online at www.ocde.us/decathlon. Click our "Donate" button on the right side of the page.

Note: You do not need to set-up a PayPal account to donate online.

Option 2: Download our Champions for OCAD brochure online at www.ocde.us/decathlon. Click on the brochure link and fill out the form.

Option 3: Corporate sponsorship opportunities are also available, which include various levels of recognition for your organization.

For more information, please contact: Kristin Rigby, Program Specialist at 714.966.4435 or krigby@ocde.us.

Celebrating our Mission in Numbers!

The mission of OCAD is to inspire academic excellence and build 21st century skills that prepare students for college and careers. For the last few years we have reported annual results from our student surveys that assessed the program's impact on student engagement and developing 21st century skills in the areas of communication, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and positive character traits. The results are in for our 2016-2017 student survey and it's easy to see that our program continues its positive impact! Check out the graphics below for the results of last year's OCAD Student Survey.



83%

of students reported that the program improved skills in **critical thinking**



84%

of students reported the development of **stronger character traits**



85%

of students reported that the program improved skills in **team work**



93%

of students reported that the program improved skills in **communication**



56%

of students reported that the program improved skills in **creativity**

94%

of students reported that the program helped them to **build relationships with their peers**

82%

of students reported that the program helped them to **become more involved at school**