

Los Angeles Unified School District

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

333 S. Beaudry Ave., 24th Floor

Los Angeles, CA 90017

Phone: (213) 241-6766

Fax: (213) 241-8952

www.lausd.net



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feb. 17, 2021

Contact:

Monica Carazo, 213-247-4087

Luis Mora, 310-963-6705

Grant High Wins Los Angeles Unified Academic Decathlon

LOS ANGELES (Feb. 17, 2021) – Ulysses S. Grant High School (Grant High) in Valley Glen was announced today as the winner of Los Angeles Unified’s 40th annual Academic Decathlon, a rigorous scholastic competition that challenges students’ knowledge and skill in a variety of subjects.

The theme of this year’s decathlon is “The Cold War,” with students spending countless hours of intense study preparing for multiple-choice tests in art, economics, math, music, science and social science, as well as prepared and impromptu speeches, an interview and an essay. Due to the current health crisis, the academic tests were administered online, while the speeches and interviews were virtual.

Coached by Grant High teacher David Sanchez and former Academic Decathlete Brennan Azizi, the winning team students Yadira Castillo, Braulio Hernandez, Vivian Le, Ruben Palafox, Mary Tovanyan and Juan Valencia took first place with 48,180.3 of a possible 60,000 points.

Grant High and the following high-scoring Los Angeles Unified teams will compete in the California Academic Decathlon, which will be a virtual contest held March 3-20: Van Nuys High School, which earned second-place honors with 40,316.60. points; John Marshall High School, 40,158.80 points; Westchester Enriched Sciences Magnets, 38,119.60; Bell High School, last year’s Los Angeles Unified Academic Decathlon champion, 37,787.70 points; Sherman Oaks Center for Enriched Studies Magnet, 37,169.40 points; Verdugo Hills High School, 36,422.20 points; and North Hollywood High School, 35,520.60 points.

“Congratulations decathletes, coaches and all who participated in the Academic Decathlon this year,” Superintendent Austin Beutner said. “‘The Cold War’ – what a rich topic. I can remember my first visit to Berlin in 1980, at the height of the Cold War. Working in Russia in the mid-’90s on behalf of the Clinton administration, helping transition that economy to a market economy. And today, we still see echoes and repercussions around the world. You have to be a polymath to do well in the Decathlon.

“Congratulations on your progress, keep up the great work in school, and I wish you much, much success in your journey,” he said.

In addition to the team scores, Yadira Castillo from Grant High earned the highest individual score with a total of 8,860.7 points, followed by Madison Sznicer from Northridge Academy High with 8,378.6 points and Grant High decathlete Vivian Le with 8,269 points.

-more-

Mike Gross from Northridge Academy High School was recognized as Coach of the Year.

Los Angeles Unified is an Academic Decathlon powerhouse, with its schools holding 23 state titles and 19 national championships.

"Congratulations to all who participated in our 40th Annual Los Angeles Unified Academic Decathlon," Board Member Scott M. Schmerleson said. "An extra shout out to Grant High School for winning this year's competition. I am so proud of all of you, of how hard you worked, all that you overcame and learned during this rigorous process. I also want to thank and acknowledge the coaches and all the volunteers who worked so tirelessly and all our sponsors who helped make this happen. Thank you!"

"Congratulations to the students of Grant High School for your impressive win in this year's Academic Decathlon and to all the students who participated in this competition," Board President Kelly Gonez said. "As a former teacher, I know how much is on your plate, especially now during distance learning. I commend you all for rising to the challenge virtually this year!"

"I would like to congratulate the students of Grant High School for winning this year's Academic Decathlon," Board Member Dr. George J. McKenna III said. "I also want to acknowledge all of the students who participated for their tenacity, diligence, hard work and perseverance in this virtual environment."

"Congratulations Academic Decathlon on 40 years of lifting the talents and genius of our students," Board Member Mónica García said. "I want to congratulate every student who has participated and every staff member who has supported this amazing community. We believe in all of our amazing future students and will continue to have high expectations for them."

"Congratulations to the winners of this year's LA Unified Academic Decathlon, and to everyone who participated in the District's first ever virtual ACADECA competition," Board Member Nick Melvoin said. "We are proud to have so many talented students and educators overcome the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic to continue this annual tradition."

"Congratulations to the Grant High School team," Board Member Jackie Goldberg said. "I am proud of all students who spent hours studying and practicing to compete in the Academic Decathlon. I would also like to thank their families and their coaches for their extra efforts."

"Congratulations to the decathletes, families, coaches and volunteers for excelling in the 40th Annual LAUSD Academic Decathlon," Board Member Tanya Ortiz Franklin said. "Even though the competition presented new challenges with a virtual setting this year, I am extremely proud of your perseverance and achievement."

###