

US Linguistics Team Brings Home Numerous Awards



For eight US high-school students, the most coveted award coming out of Stockholm this year isn't in Physics or Medicine. This week, 26 teams of young linguists from 18 countries descended on the beautiful capital of Sweden to participate in the 8th International Olympiad in Linguistics.

This year the US team won a large number of prizes: Ben Sklaroff of Palo Alto, Calif. won one of three gold medals awarded in the Individual Competition. Three other contestants, Martin Camacho of St. Paul, Minn., Allen Yuan of Farmington Hills, Mich., and Damien Jiang of Raleigh, NC won silver medals, and Alan Chang of San Jose, Calif. and Alexander Iriza of New York, NY took home bronze medals. Honorable mentions went to Brian Kong of Milton, Mass. and In-Sung Na of Old Tappan, NJ. In-Sung and Allen had just come from International Mathematics Olympiad in Astana, Kazakhstan, where they earned silver medals for the US team.

One of the two US teams, USA Blue consisting of Alex, Alan, Damien, and Martin, took home the cup awarded to the team with the highest average score in the individual competition. Damien, Martin, and Ben were also awarded Best Solution awards for their elegant explanations of individual problems.

The problems at this year's IOL were in Mongolian, Budukh, Drehu, Romansch, Blissymbolics, and genetic sequence analysis.

This is the 4th time the US has sent teams to the IOL. Team USA members are selected from more than 1,100 contestants in the North American Computational Linguistics Olympiad, held each year in February and March. This year's team was led by Dr. Lori Levin of Carnegie Mellon University, Dr. Dragomir Radev of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and Patrick Littell of the University of British Columbia.

This year's team, as well as the NACLO competition, were sponsored by the National Science Foundation, Carnegie Mellon University, the University of Michigan, D. E. Shaw, University of Pittsburgh Intelligent Systems Program, the North American chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics (NAACL), as well as other generous contributors.

Lori Levin says, "It is an honor to work with such smart and talented young people. We hope to encounter them again as they progress through their careers." Patrick Littell adds, "Even though not all of these

young scholars will go on to major in Linguistics, every one will carry with them a more sophisticated understanding of human language, which will go on to inform whatever fields they excel in."

One team member proclaims, "International Olympiad in Linguistics? More like Incredible Opportunity to Learn!"

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