Perplexing Problems, Savvy Solutions: San Diego Students and High Schools Excel in 50th Annual UCSD Math Contest

Westview Student Takes Top Individual Honors; Mira Mesa, Scripps Ranch and La Jolla High Earn Team Prizes

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Vincent Le of Westview High School earned the top prize at the 50th Annual UCSD Honors Math Contest. Here he receives his award and a TI-89 Titanium graphing calculator from Gene Arendt of Texas Instruments, which supports the contest.

Students from Westview High School, The Bishop's School, and Scripps Ranch High School took top honors in the 50th Annual UC San Diego High School Honors Math Contest, which concluded with an awards banquet and presentation of prizes last night in the Faculty Club on campus. The event was hosted by the UCSD Department of Mathematics.

Vincent Le of Westview was the top individual scorer, followed by Jeffrey Wu of The Bishop's School and Josh Wang of Scripps Ranch.

In team awards, Mira Mesa High School took top honors in the New Schools category; Scripps Ranch finished first in the Competitive category; and La Jolla High School took first place in the Highly Competitive category.

A Tijuana high school, Universidad Iberoamericana, took second place in the New Schools category.

The top students opened the ceremony by demonstrating - on overhead screens - their individual solutions to some of the test's problems. (Samples: "The integers from 1 to 10,000 are written in order around a circle. Starting at 1, every 55th number is marked - that is, 1, 56, 111...). This process is continued until a number is reached which has already been marked. How many unmarked numbers remain?" Another: "Suppose that S is a finite set of points in a plane such that every subset of three points forms the vertices of a triangle with area less than or equal to one. Prove that S is contained in some rectangle of area four."

Justin Roberts, associate professor of geometry and topology at UCSD, served as guest speaker, and delighted the assembled students with a lively explanation of the mathematics involved in knot theory.

Jonny Palm of University City High School shows the crowd his creative and correct solution to one of the exam's perplexing problems.

The competition began on April 21, with some 130 students from 20 San Diego high schools competing to solve mathematics problems, both multiple-choice and written, in three-hour tests.

Sponsored by UC San Diego, the Greater San Diego Math Council, and the San Diego County Office of Education, the contest was initiated 50 years ago by the Convair Division of General Dynamics. UC San Diego became the sole sponsor in 1972.

Bruce Arnold, director of the Math Testing and Placement Program at UCSD and chair of the event, had high praise for all the participants. "The contest helps emphasize that mastery of mathematics is the foundation for all of the sciences and many of the arts," he said. "Mathematical literacy is fundamental to a full understanding of our world and the forces which shape it. Each of the contestants in the UCSD High-School Math Contest, therefore, is among the very brightest of our students, with a powerful advantage as he or she prepares to enter college."

The top five winners received prizes from Texas Instruments and the Art of Problem Solving, and the coaches from the top three teams received prizes from Texas Instruments. The full list of all winners and their high schools, in ascending order, is provided below:

Top 25 Individual Scorers

25. (tie) Matt Drake

Rancho Buena Vista High School

Ilya Gaidarov

Torrey Pines High School

24. Joongyu (Daniel) Song

Torrey Pines High School

23. Michelle Wu

The Bishop's School

22. Cody Murray

Rancho Buena Vista High School

21. Kevin Weng

Scripps Ranch High School

20. Sungchan Kwon

University City High School

19. Aaron Schild

The Bishop's School

18. Leon Zhou

Canyon Crest Academy

17. Edward Zhu

Torrey Pines High School

16. Chad McCoy

Rancho Buena Vista High School

15. Gil Tabak

Canyon Crest Academy

14. David Ding

Canyon Crest Academy

13. Michael Skinner

University City High School

12. Richard Mu

Westview High School

11. Leo Zhou

Scripps Ranch High School

10. Benjamin Cosman

La Jolla High School

9. James Ready

La Jolla High School

8. Rui Jin

Scripps Ranch High School

7. George Hokkanen

Canyon Crest Academy

6. Junghoon Liu

Torrey Pines High School

5. Jack Latta

La Jolla High School

4. Ben Wendel

University City High School

3. Josh Wang

Scripps Ranch High School

2. Jeffrey Wu

The Bishop's School

1. Vincent Le

Westview High School

Team Awards (top 5 scorers in Part I from a designated team of 8)

New Schools

4. Patrick Henry High School 3. Mt. Carmel High School 2. Universidad Iberoamericana 1. Mira Mesa High School

Competitive

4. Rancho Buena Vista High School 3. University City High School 2. Canyon Crest Academy 1. Scripps Ranch High School

Highly Competitive

4. Westview High School 3. The Bishop's School 2. Torrey Pines High School 1. La Jolla High School

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