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PRESS RELEASE

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The 2024 WorldQuest winning team from Palm Desert High School, from left: Tilda Rector, Kiamehr Karagah, Sareen Bhakta and Shaurya Mahajan.

Coachella Valley high school students compete for scholarships in 19th annual Academic WorldQuest competition

PALM DESERT, Calif. – Nine Coachella Valley high schools competed in the 19th annual Academic WorldQuest competition on Feb. 1.

The event, which took place at the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus, was facilitated and coordinated by Michael Karp, an assistant professor of history at the Palm Desert Campus and member of the Board of Directors of the World Affairs Council of the Desert.

“It is an honor to organize WorldQuest, as it has become one of the key annual events at the Palm Desert Campus,” Karp said. “It’s such an exciting opportunity to host so many high schools on our campus each year and showcase the Indian Wells Theater and our programs.”

Palm Desert High School took first place. Team members included Sareen Bhakta, Kiamehr Karagah, Shaurya Mahajan, Tilda Rector and Coach Patricia Lizza.

Xavier College Prep captured second place and Rancho Mirage High School took third.

The Xavier College Prep team included team members Jake Hermsen, Destiny Hernandez, Matthew Jugan, Sarah Macwan, and Coach Tonya Carr. The Rancho Mirage High School team members included Lorelei Beyronneau, Paige Foster, Elyana Lewis, Micaela Sese and Coach Kim Robinson.

After five individual rounds and more than two hours of competing, Palm Desert High School finished on top with a score of 43 out of 50. The team will move on to compete against other high school teams throughout the country in the National Academic WorldQuest Competition on April 20.

Scholarships were awarded to each student in the top three teams: first place, \$300; second place, \$200; and third place, \$100. The most improved award went to Palm Springs High School, whose team members won \$75 each.

Sponsored by World Affairs Council of the Desert, the Academic WorldQuest is a team competition that challenges the students’ knowledge of world affairs.

The topics this year included NATO: Alliance and Collective Defense in a Changing World; The Global South; Women’s Contributions to Track II Diplomacy; Navigating AI: The Global Workforce; and Current Events.

This year’s competing high schools also included Coachella Valley High School, Desert Hot Springs High School, La Quinta High School, Palm Valley School and Shadow Hills High School. Certificates of recognition were given to all participating team members.

The competition began with a thank you to the event sponsors and introductions by Ken Bouldin, president of the World Affairs Council of the Desert, and Edna Martinez, the associate vice president of the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus. Following their opening remarks, an introduction of the coaches and teams was provided by Karp.

Karp served as chair for the WorldQuest committee and was assisted by Kim Burge, Lisa Corbin, Tom Headrick, Gordon Kramer, Charles Porter, Priscilla Porter and Karen Speros. Brenda Wallace served as the event chair and coordinator.

Event sponsors included Charles and Priscilla Porter, Barry Berlin and Mary Reisher as platinum sponsors; The Auen Foundation and the Irene W. and Guy L. Anderson Children's Foundation as gold sponsors; and the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus, College of the Desert, UBS Financial Services, Inc., McDonalds of the Shalhoub Management Company, Inc., Dr. Myron and Joanna Mintz, Suz Hunt, the Office of V. Manuel Perez of the Riverside County Board of Supervisors and the Walter Clark Legal Group as silver sponsors.

For more information about the Academic WorldQuest, visit the [World Affairs Council of the Desert website](#).

About PDC: The CSUSB Palm Desert Campus offers bachelor's and master's degrees, teaching credentials and certificates, and plays a vital role in educating the region's growing population.

For more information about the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus, contact Mike Singer in the Office of Strategic Communication at msinger@csusb.edu or (760) 341-2883, ext. 78107, or visit the PDC website at www.csusb.edu/pdc.