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PRESS RELEASE

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The 2025 WorldQuest winning team from Palm Desert High School, from left: Shaurya Mahajan, Tilda Rector, Kiamehr Karagah, Sareen Bhakta and Coach Tricia Lizza.

Palm Desert High School takes first place in 20th annual Academic WorldQuest competition

PALM DESERT, Calif. – Seven Coachella Valley high schools competed in the 20th annual Academic WorldQuest competition on Feb. 13.

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

“This year’s competition was very special, as we celebrated 20 years of Academic WorldQuest in the Coachella Valley,” said Karp. “Over the past two decades, hundreds of high school students have competed in WorldQuest. Each year, dozens of volunteers make the event happen, but in looking back at the past 20 years, none of it would have been possible without Charles and Priscilla Porter. They founded WorldQuest in the desert and have tirelessly supported it. In honor of their legacy, we officially renamed our local competition the Charles and Priscilla Porter Academic WorldQuest competition.”

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

Rancho Mirage High School captured second place, and La Quinta High School took third after a long tiebreaker round with Palm Valley School.

The Rancho Mirage High School team included team members Lorelei Beyronneau, Paige Foster, Elyana Lewis, Micaela Sese and Coach Kim Robinson. The La Quinta High School team members included Noe Baltazar, Kai Jackman, Tyler Nettimi, Ryan Shaner and Coach Justin Klockenteger.

After five individual rounds and nearly two hours of competing, Palm Desert High School finished on top with a score of 42 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 28.

Scholarships were awarded to each student in the top three teams: first place, \$300; second place, \$200; and third place, \$100. The Maggie and Dr. Tom Headrick most improved award went to Palm Valley 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 Space and National Security; Borders and Boundaries; Mexico: 2025 Focus Country; and Great Decisions, with the subtopics The Future of NATO and European Security; AI and American National Security; and Current Events.

This year’s competing high schools also included Desert Hot Springs High School, Shadow Hills High School and Xavier College Prep. Certificates of recognition were given to all participating team members.

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. Jim McFarlin, who is a member of the World Affairs Council and serves as chairman of the board of directors, concluded the event with a speech and dedication to Charles and Priscilla Porter and announcing the new name of the competition.

Event sponsors included Charles and Priscilla Porter, Barry Berlin and Mary Reisher, and Lance Eldred and Dr. Rita Stec as platinum sponsors; The Auen Foundation as a gold sponsor; Dr. Myron and Joanne Mintz, McDonalds of the Shalhoub Management Co. Inc., 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 the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus: The CSUSB Palm Desert Campus is dedicated to providing a transformative educational experience in the Coachella Valley. With a focus on academic excellence and community engagement, the campus offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs designed to meet the diverse needs of its students and the region.

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