



## **GRANADA HILLS CHARTER CAPTURES 2019 CALIFORNIA ACADEMIC DECATHLON TITLE**

School now heads to Nationals in April, seeking seventh U.S. victory

March 24, 2019 – The Academic Decathlon team from Granada Hills Charter (GHC) High School won the California Academic Decathlon this weekend and will return to the National title tournament where it will seek its seventh championship.

Granada Hills Charter scored 59,346 points to capture the title. Dilawar Khan, 12<sup>th</sup> grader on the GHC team, was the highest scoring individual in the tournament with 9,612.4 points. The team will travel to Bloomington, Minn. for the National tournament scheduled April 25-27. El Camino Real Charter High School, fellow charter school, placed second in the state competition.

“We’re thrilled that our 2019 team is carrying on Granada Hills Charter’s tradition of dedication, teamwork and perseverance,” said Brian Bauer, Executive Director of Granada Hills Charter. “The Academic Decathlon is always a challenging event that presents students with unexpected hurdles, and this year’s team responded by studying and working as hard as possible. Throughout their studies and competitions, they have shown real character and unity as a team. We all wish them the best of luck in Minnesota.”

The school attributes the success to the team’s sense of camaraderie and dedication to the competition and each other. Ben LaFreniere, 12<sup>th</sup> grader and decathlete, received failing grades when he first came to GHC but through the support of his teammates, he was inspired.

“Before Decathlon, I felt incapable and unmotivated in school”, said Ben. “Even while trying out for Decathlon, I initially felt discouraged because everyone seemed so much ‘smarter’ and motivated. But as I witnessed their desire to learn, my interest was piqued. With the support of my teammates, I uncovered my own intellectual curiosity and pushed myself to new limits I never fathomed was possible.”

The teams’ coaches are Alina Lee, Linda Kang, and Amy Contreras. Julia Howelman, administrative director of instruction, supervises and supports the team and coaches. The decathletes are Dwaipayam Chanda (alternate), Connie Chen, Tamara Cruz, Nicole Dersahakian, Lelija Kazlauskas, Dilawar Khan, Ben LaFreniere, Kenny Ly, Jared Matsubayashi, Isabel Mercado (alternate), Ezhan Mirza, and Jasdeep Sidhu (alternate).



With a victory in the National competition, GHC would earn its seventh National title. The team won a Los Angeles-area decathlon for charter schools to qualify for the state tournament.

The Academic Decathlon involves 10 events revolving around a central topic in seven subject areas: science, literature, art, music, social science, economics and mathematics. The competition includes multiple-choice exams in each subject, as well as essays and speeches. It culminates with a fast-paced Super Quiz relay. This year's topic is "The 1960s: A Transformational Decade".

As part of the competition, each school enters a field of students from the following GPA categories, - "A" students (honors), - "B" students (scholastic), and - "C or below" (varsity).

"Each year, I'm impressed by the commitment of the students and coaches and by their spirit of teamwork and support for each other, which is a great reflection of the educational environment we seek to foster," Bauer said. "These competitions are grueling and also life-changing, and the lessons all decathletes learn – grit, team work, resilience, humility, to name a few - are the most important part."

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**About Granada Hills Charter School:** Granada Hills Charter School, the largest charter school in the nation, is an independent public school in the San Fernando Valley. A fiscally independent conversion charter school, Granada Hills Charter has a current student enrollment of approximately 4,750 in its high school program and 400 students to be enrolled in 2019-20 in its new TK-8 program. Both programs have a combined annual student wait list of nearly 4,000. The School's student population is one of the most diverse, with more than 40 languages other than English spoken at home and over 60 nationalities represented. Over 50 percent of students are eligible for the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program. As a 501c3 non-profit benefit corporation, the School's Governing Board is the legal entity overseeing all school policy and its \$60 million operating budget. The school is ranked "#1 Best Charter High School in California," "#4 Most Diverse Public High School in Los Angeles" and "#11 Best Charter High Schools in America" by Niche.com in the *2019 Best Schools* rankings.