

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Harker DECA Shines Competitively with a Stellar Performance at the 2017 International Career Development Conference

San Jose, California – From Tuesday April 25th, 2017 to Sunday April 30th, 2017, 30 students and chaperones from The Harker School DECA Chapter traveled to Anaheim, California to compete in the 2017 International Career Development Conference (ICDC) at the Anaheim Convention Center. The chapter stayed at the Disneyland Hotel. This conference consisted of tough competitions, inspiring leadership academies and unforgettable memories. Eight teams from Harker DECA ended up staging in the preliminary finalists round. Six of those eight teams had the opportunity to compete in the finalist round, with three teams placing in the Top 10, one team taking third place and one student taking first place.

Finalists are as follows:

1st Place

- Evan Cheng (9); Principles of Hospitality and Tourism

3rd Place

- Nishka Ayyar (10), Riya Gupta (10); Business Law and Ethics Team Decision Making

Top 10 Finalists

- Enya Lu (10); Business Finance Series
- Shania Wang (10); Public Relations Project
- Neelesh Ramachandran (11); Virtual Business Challenge - Accounting

Top 20 Finalists

- Haley Tran (12); Restaurant and Food Service Management

Testing - Top 10 Finalists

- Shreyas Chandrashekar (11); Sports and Entertainment Marketing Series
- Mona Lee (11); Apparel and Accessories Marketing Series

Leaving on Tuesday afternoon, students and chaperones boarded a Southwest Airlines flight to Los Angeles. Upon arrival, they took shuttles to the Disneyland Hotel and checked in to their rooms. Afterwards, students had the opportunity to visit the DECA Images Store in the Anaheim Convention Center to buy DECA Blazers for competitions and other merchandise. That night, students were released on their own for dinner and visited Downtown Disney.

On Wednesday, some students woke up early in the morning to take part in the DECA 5K run at the Angels Stadium to raise money and awareness for the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA). The entire chapter then attended an opening session for California DECA, where they received advice on event preparation from past ICDC winners and took a state photo. Harker DECA also received registration packets, which included California state bucket hats and state pins to trade with competitors from around the world. That afternoon, the chapter held their own Study Session to provide competitors with the opportunity for final competition preparation. In the evening, students and chaperones

enjoyed a chapter dinner at the Rainforest Café in Downtown Disney. At night, members attended the Grand Opening Session along with the 19,000 other ICDC attendees. The session included a Fashion Show presented by the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising (FIDM), an inspiring keynote speaker and performances from country singer Billy Gilman and band Echosmith.

On Thursday, students attended event briefing and took their written examinations. Along with the 23 competitors, three students began their Emerging Leader Series in the Ignite Academy to build their leadership skills. Afterwards, the chapter enjoyed a fun night with the DECA Party at Universal Studios Hollywood. Students explored the park, made connections with people from all over the world and had a lot of fun.

Friday consisted of presentations and role plays in the initial round of the competition process throughout the whole day.

“The atmosphere before our presentation was definitely different than previous conferences. We were sitting amongst tough competitors, and this definitely stressed us out,” said Katelyn Vo (9), competitor in Fashion Merchandising Plan. “However, my partners and I pulled through, and I think we did really well overall. It was a great experience getting to compete at ICDC.”

It was also the final day of the Emerging Leader Series, from which the attending students left inspired for future opportunities and truly honed their leadership abilities. After the competitive events and academies concluded, Harker DECA had the opportunity to visit Disneyland for the rest of the day.

On Thursday and Friday, students also had the chance to visit the Exhibit Hall booths during the day. These exhibits included various business colleges and corporations, and students were able to network and meet new people from different states and countries. Visitors received beneficial information about their futures and registered for mailing lists if they were interested in learning more. Booths were also set up for those campaigning for a position on the 2017-2018 Executive DECA team.

Saturday was the last full day of ICDC. In the morning, students and chaperones gathered for the Achievement Awards Session to find out whether they would move on to the final round of competitions taking place that day. In each event, approximately 20 competitors from the over 200 teams would advance to finals. Top participants for presentations, career cluster exams and overall performers were recognized individually. Harker had an amazing turnout, with eight teams receiving the opportunity to come up on stage for their achievements. A total of six teams qualified to compete in the final round of competitions.

“In terms of competition, Harker DECA had its most successful ICDC thus far, which is really a result of everyone's hard work over the past year,” said Shreyas Chandrashekar (11), Harker DECA co-Chief Executive Officer and Testing Finalist in Sports and Entertainment Marketing Series. “I loved seeing how much these students learned and improved regardless of whether they were finalists or not. Everyone was cheering on and

rooting for their fellow students, and there was a real sense of camaraderie among them. We really came together as a group and that really contributed to the overall high energy of the chapter this year.”

The rest of the students had the afternoon to themselves, with many choosing to work on homework, visit Disneyland or get some rest. In the evening, students and chaperones got ready for the Grand Awards Session. As the Top 10 Finalists were announced, Harker DECA was extremely proud when five teams were announced and recognized for placing in the Top 10. Members bursted with happiness when it was revealed that Cheng had won first place in the Principles of Hospitality and Tourism event and that Ayyar and Gupta had won third place in the Business Law and Ethics Team Decision Making event.

“It felt amazing going on stage. We didn’t believe it and it was really surreal but we realized our accomplishment afterwards and my partner and I were really happy,” said Riya Gupta (10), Third Place in Business Law and Ethics Team Decision Making. “I will truly never forget this moment.”

One member of the chapter, Shania Wang (10), Vice President of Public Relations and Top 10 Finalist in Public Relations Project, was also recognized on stage for being a part of the ICDC Anaheim Live Social Media Team. Throughout the conference, she worked with DECA Inc. staff to ensure satisfactory social media coverage on all outlets. As part of the Editorial Team, Shania also wrote several articles for DECA Direct that will be posted in the upcoming weeks.

After the awards ceremony, Harker DECA celebrated all of their accomplishments throughout the past year with the rest of California DECA at the State Dinner.

On Sunday, Harker DECA took one last chapter photo in the morning before saying goodbye to Anaheim and leaving on shuttles to return to the Los Angeles airport, where they took an afternoon flight back to San Jose.

ICDC 2017 definitely was one to remember for attendees from the numerous pleasures, cheers and memories made. This final conference of the year was one many people will keep in their hearts forever.

“ICDC this year was an unforgettable experience for the Harker DECA chapter. We were able to come exceptionally prepared with our strongest competitors and they saw great success!” said Juston Glass, Harker DECA Advisor. “My hope is that the positive energy experienced here will carry on into next year and bring our chapter to the next level. Most importantly, students were able strengthen their business acumen, develop professionally and grow in confidence as emerging leaders and entrepreneurs. I can’t wait to see what’s in store for them as they own their future.”

Although the conclusion of ICDC signals the official end of the competitive season for this year, Harker DECA already looks forward to another exciting year of success for the following schoolyear. Go Eagles!

About The Harker School DECA

Harker DECA is an International Competitive Business Organization that prepares emerging leaders and entrepreneurs in four fields of business: marketing, finance, hospitality, and management. Our DECA chapter integrates classroom instruction, applies learning, connects to business, and promotes competition in order to prepare the next generation to be academically prepared, community oriented, professionally responsible, and experienced leaders.

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