UCI Physical Sciences hosts Orange County Science Olympiad

The olympiad saw over 900 students from 49 different schools visit campus to compete in science contests.

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Students competed in science-based events throughout the day at the UC Irvine School of Physical Sciences.

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In February, over 900 middle and high school students from 49 different schools across Orange County visited UC Irvine to compete in a regional Southern California heat of the nationwide Science Olympiad competition. Teams of students competed in events that tested their knowledge in fields from astronomy to Earth science.

Undergraduates in the UCI Department of Chemistry worked with faculty and staff to turn what they learned in class into events for the olympiad. “The event provides an excellent opportunity for UCI undergraduates to engage with middle and high school students in a wonderful educational form,” said UCI Professor of Teaching Kimberly Edwards who helps run the yearly event. “So many of our undergraduates are committed to making the event a success.”

That includes the UCI Science Olympiad Club founded by second-year engineering undergraduate Antonio Velasco. The club gave the olympiad a boost by encouraging and enlisting UCI STEM majors to participate in the event. “We've been able to create an impact beyond UCI by mobilizing our experienced volunteers, sending groups to support and help run tournaments throughout SoCal, including the Los Angeles regional tournaments and the state tournament at Caltech,” said Velasco.

“They’re making UCI look good in the region,” Edwards said of the club. “The engagement of the club and many more volunteers this year was really great. I believe we had close to 150 UCI undergraduates engaged as event writers or volunteers.”

The event was made possible thanks to a collaboration between UCI and the Orange County Department of Education (OCDE). “The regional competition for Southern California was a huge success,” an OCDE statement read. “We are thankful that our team was able to provide a safe, fair environment for hundreds of students and coaches to come and showcase their work.”

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