

# Beckman Foundation Awards \$1,500 OC Community Support Grant to SciOly Team at Beckman High School

*BHS Senior Derek Kong Answers Our Questions About the Science Olympiad*

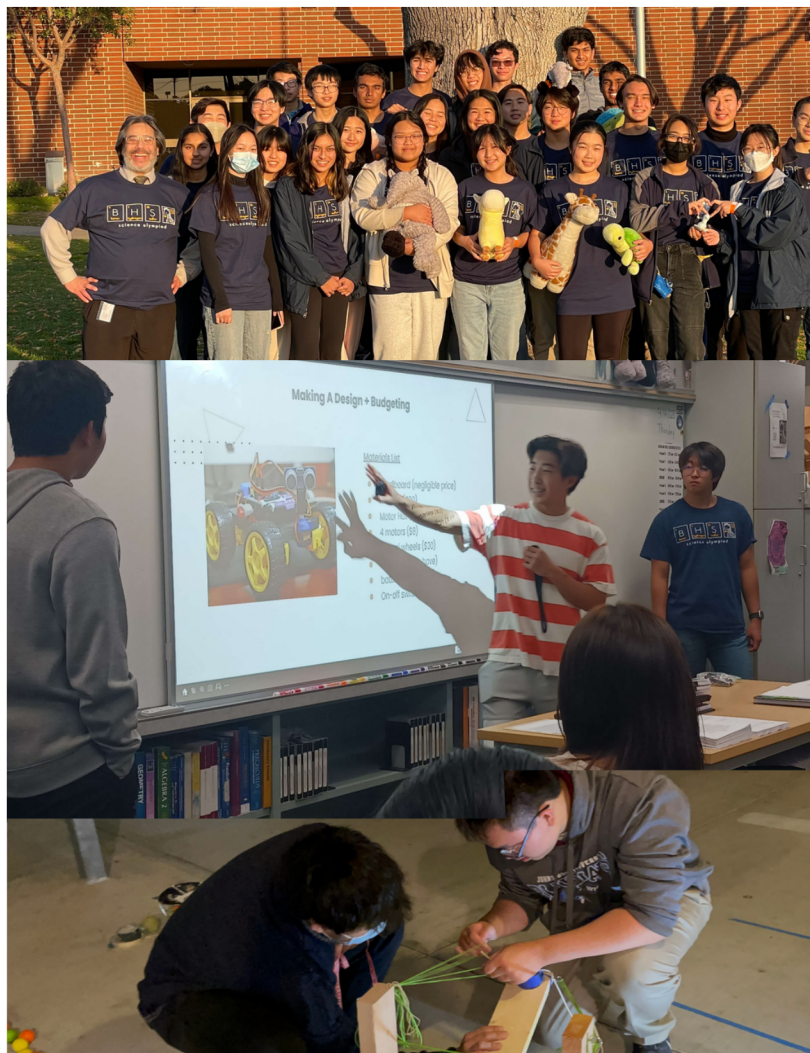
**AMBF: Hi Derek, can you share a little bit about yourself?**

DK: My name is Derek Kong and I'm the President of the Science Olympiad at Beckman High School. I'm a senior thinking about possibly pursuing electrical engineering.

**AMBF: Great! How does SciOly operate at Beckman High School?**

DK: We have two teams – A team and B team – and each team has about 15 members that are divided by skill. The teams are fluid throughout the academic year and any grade can participate. Our school has fielded a team for over a decade.

Last week, we did a seminar where we got a bunch of interested people – around 50-ish people – and so we were talking about which events to highlight and introducing new people to events they might like because tryouts will be the weekend of October 9. Then we choose the team, and our next meeting will be October 19. We have mostly returning



*At right (from top to bottom): The SciOly team at Beckman High School, a seminar to introduce new people to events, working on Detector Building. Images courtesy of SciOly team members, provided by Derek Kong (Sept. 2023).*

members to the team. There are a lot of underclassmen that are very interested, but don't yet have a lot of experience. Still, even if students don't make the team, they can attend our lectures.

**AMBF: So, those who don't make the team are still included in activities, and then how do you go from a group of 50 interested students to the smaller, competitive team?**

DK: The first round of tryouts weeds out some people, but we do still like to mentor raw talent and help people develop themselves. About 40 people might remain, then it will get narrowed down to 30, and down to 15 for competitions.

**AMBF: You serve as President of the team, and are there also faculty who will advise or lend support as you prepare and attend competitions?**

DK: Yes. Dr. Calmer and Mr. Beilin will have shared responsibility, and they will accompany the team to competition.

**AMBF: Why is the Science Olympiad important for Beckman High School students?**

DK: In Beckman Foundation's mission statement, we see our program. But we see AP classes are moving away from hands-on work. SciOly lets students do hands-on work like titration, flame tests, or powder identification they might not be able to do in

class. I'm not sure why things are moving away from hands-on work, but it seems like there is more emphasis on achieving scores in AP classes in general.

**AMBF: How will you use the \$1,500 Community Support Grant from Beckman Foundation?**

DK: With the grant, our goal is to make Top 3 in Orange County and advance to State [competition]. We'll go to three to four competitions, which will cost \$1,200. The remainder will be used for an event called Detector Building. You use basic electronic components to construct probes that have physical or chemical uses. I competed in this at BirdSO [National Competition] last year and we placed fourth, so it's a strong event for us. We constructed an electronic scale, a thermometer the year before. This year, we're constructing a redox probe which is really similar to pH. Supplies we would need would be electronic components, different types of metals, microcontrollers like Arduinos, and batteries.

**AMBF: We're glad to be able to provide support for your team's efforts! Can we close by asking you to share some personal thoughts on what makes SciOly special?**

DK: Beckman Science Olympiad is a place where you are encouraged to find your genuine interests and passions by actually doing things – getting your hands into it, experiencing it, and not just reading about it. ■