

Excellence

Center for Excellence in Education

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*Thomas Xiong at the
2016 National Finals*

The sights and especially the sounds from the 2016 International Biology Olympiad (IBO) in Hanoi, Vietnam still play vividly in Team

USA member **Thomas Xiong**'s mind.

"I distinctly remember at the opening ceremony, the performance of a traditional Vietnamese piece on the Dan Bau (a traditional Vietnamese instrument)," he said. "I greatly enjoy classical music, as I play the cello, and this instrument was no exception, as I had never heard quite a sound like it before. It serves to symbolize what stuck with me the most from IBO: the ability to discover new beauty through a variety of cultures and individuals."

Also, memorable for Xiong was his stellar performance at the IBO. He finished 26th overall in the field of 284, securing a gold medal for his efforts.

"Both USABO and IBO augmented my skills in learning, quickly processing information, tackling unfamiliar problems and time management, yet perhaps most important of all, how to deal with mistakes in an efficient, beneficial manner," Xiong said. "I made easily preventable mistakes at both USABO camp and IBO, but rather than succumb to frustration, I learned I must move on from the past immediately in order to conquer the deluge to tests still to come."

For Xiong, the most gratifying part of the experience was getting to witness so many cultures and meet people from various backgrounds.

"It's incredible how many countries can speak English, and how many can't, how many share the same traditions, and how many united under a common passion called biology," he said. "I learned a lot from each competitor I talked to; indeed, when would one, barring going to the Olympics, meet so many people from so many countries, all converging for the same passion, at once?"



*2016 Team USA from left to right:
Varkey Alumootil, Boyang (Peter)
Dun, Bowen Jing and Thomas Xiong*

The senior at Seven Lakes High School in Katy, Texas hopes to one day pursue a Ph.D. in a biology field, become a professor and researcher, and go on to contribute to groundbreaking research to science in the 21st century.

“Of course, the future is a fog; I know there exists paths that lead to I know not what,” Xiong said.

“There may be some science, some math, and even some art that entralls me to the point of devoting my life to it. [As life goes on, I will sidestep absolute axioms and remember that life is malleable: it pushes and pulls, but one would be best off attempting to sculpt the masterpiece he sees fit.](#)”