

Excellence

Center for Excellence in Education

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Varkey Alumootil working in the lab during the 2016 National Finals

While **Varkey Alumootil** was awaiting the medal announcements at the 2016 USABO Finals at Marymount University this June, he found his heart was beating rapidly, much like his experience after running one of his many cross-country races. In his heart he felt he deserved a bronze medal, if he was lucky, maybe he would get a silver, but he quietly longed for a gold medal, and the chance to represent the United States at the 27th annual International Biology Olympiad (IBO) in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Alumootil was never so happy to hear his name than when it came time to announce the gold medallists, and he learned that he would be one of four to represent Team USA. He realized his hard work had paid off and that he had earned himself a trip to the IBO, and that it was an experience that would pay off in the future.

“The USABO National Finals has served as a vehicle to explore the breadth and depth of the biological sciences...from doing microbiological labs to identifying species and relationships in the local wilderness to attending lectures by world-class scientists describing their ground breaking research,” Alumootil said. “I have made life-long friends who share similar passions, and I hope to engage with them in research and other ventures for many years to come.”

Alumootil went on to finish in 35th place at the IBO amongst a field of 284 competitors, receiving a silver medal for his efforts.

“It was interesting meeting all the people from different countries and traveling throughout Vietnam,” he said. “Throughout this whole experience, I learned quite a lot of biology, both theoretical and practical, and I’m a lot more confident in my biology abilities after this.”

The senior at Canyon Crest Academy in San Diego, Calif. is keeping his university options open, but knows one thing for certain ...

“I’m not really sure what I want to do in the future,” he said. “I could go into research or industry, but it will definitely be in a STEM field.”



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