

# Riddle me this: Quiz Bowl team has all the answers

By Anne Ternus-Bellamy  
ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

Davis High School's Quiz Bowl team came out of the gates quickly. In this, the first full year as a club team — and just a month and a half into the season — the Blue Devils already have qualified for nationals in Chicago in May.

The team qualified thanks to a second-place finish at a competition at Mira Loma High School in Sacramento over the weekend.

"This is the first time that DHS has ever qualified a team for nationals," said DHS senior and team member Julian Fuchs.

And while they will continue competing over the next several months, they'll also have an additional challenge ahead, he said: Raising enough money for the team to actually go to Chicago.

Given that these are Davis High students, perhaps it's no surprise that in a competition based on knowledge, they come out near the top.

High School Quiz Bowl is a fast-paced question-and-answer game involving teams all over the country. Students use a standardized format, answering questions that cover the gamut of the high school curriculum, from science to math, art to literature, history to music, with some sports and pop culture thrown in as well.

Last Thursday, when the team gathered for a practice round during lunch at Davis High — with senior Donald Pinckney serving as moderator — their correct answers

included Darwin, stoicism, Thomas Paine, refraction, Robert Frost, One Direction and a Shinto goddess.

Each student brings his or her own strength, but early on, they were pretty science-heavy, with many of the team members also competing on the DHS Science Bowl team.

"When it started," Fuchs said, "everyone just knew science. Now we're diversified, though we're still weak on art and religion."

They diversified by recruiting sophomores and juniors with strengths in areas other than science. Clearly their efforts paid off.

In October, Davis High fielded two teams at the Bellarmine Novice Tournament in San Jose. There, the Davis "A Team," competing together for only the second time, came in second out of 32 teams.

Fuchs, meanwhile, was the second-highest individual scorer. Over the weekend in Sacramento, he was the top scorer.

Also this past weekend, the A team found itself in a three-game playoff against Mira Loma, but after winning just one of the three games, Davis had to settle for second place.

"Thankfully second place was enough to qualify for nationals," Fuchs said.

The team has been practicing weekly at school and online on Saturdays.

"It's a lot of fun, and the questions are interesting," Pinckney said.

Senior Michael Zhao, who was instrumental in starting the team at the end of last year, says there's a place for everybody in Quiz Bowl.

"It gives a chance for

any person, from any background, to show what they know," he said. "Even if you're not academic, you can still contribute."

"It rewards you for knowing a lot," he added.

Fuchs agreed. "I've spent a lot of time learning trivia and now I can put it to use," he said.

The team will continue competing in the coming months, Fuchs said, and will continue practicing and preparing for the national competition.

"We'll be pretty busy with Quiz Bowl for pretty much the rest of the year," he said.

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Davis High School's Quiz Bowl Team — including, from left, Julian Fuchs, Megan Yamoah, Henry Zhang, Daniel Zhu, Usama Riaz, Alex Chen, Brandon Lin, Michael Zhao and Ashok Kunda — competed in the Bellarmine Novice Tournament in San Jose last month.

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## What's happening

### Wednesday

■ Does the expense of college have you worried? Come to a presentation sponsored by the Davis High School PTA and learn more about paying for college. The event, from 7:30 to 9 p.m. in the Holmes Junior High School multipurpose room, 1220 Drexel Drive, will feature Beatrice Schultz, founder of Westface College Planning. Schultz will talk about steps to take to maximize financial aid eligibility, understanding the expected family contribution, cost of attendance, FAFSA and CSS profiles, and the true cost of college, comparing public and private universities. For more information, email [mitchjen@comcast.net](mailto:mitchjen@comcast.net).

### Nov. 25-27

■ The city of Davis presents **Tumbling with Turkeys**, a three-day camp for children ages 5-12. Featuring gymnastics, crafts and games, the camp runs from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Wednesday. The cost is \$79 per child. For more information or to register, call 530-757-5626 or visit [www.cityofdavis.org](http://www.cityofdavis.org).

■ Before you dust off the turkey fryer and find your favorite uncle's stuffing recipe, make sure you've enrolled your kids into a **Thanksgiving break activity program**. The city of Davis has several Thanksgiving break offerings from Monday to Wednesday, Nov. 25-27, to tide your child over until the tryptophan can!

The Gymnastics and Dance Center at the Civic Center Gym, 23 Russell Blvd., is holding Tumbling with Turkeys from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. each day. There will be gymnastics, games and crafts for kids 5 to 12 years old.

If forward rolls aren't your child's thing, how about **Ninjaneering**? Ninjaneering with Lego is for children ages 5 to 7. They'll build the Fire Temple (no actual flame involved), race Skull trucks and encounter the mighty Dragon. The class runs from 9 a.m. to noon at the Veterans' Memorial Center, 203 E. 14th St.

For older kids, ages 8-12, there is the **Junkyard Challenge**, which involves building elevators, bulldozers (not to scale), conveyor belts and other motorized contraptions out of Legos. The class meets from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Veterans' Memorial Center.

For specific class information or to sign up, call the city of Davis Community Services Office at 530-757-5626 or visit [www.cityofdavis.org](http://www.cityofdavis.org).



## Emerson and Da Vinci stack up

Students at Emerson and Da Vinci junior high schools — including Abbey Fisk, background, far left, Patrick Yeung, left, and Autumn Marcheschi, right — participated in an attempt to set a world sport stacking record last week. It was the eighth annual Stack Up, with thousands of participants around the world taking part in what Guinness World Records called the "World's Largest" sport stacking event — a sport deemed "a track meet for your hands at warp speed." Students had to build up and take down pyramids of cups as fast as possible for 30 minutes. The sport is appealing to teachers and students because it's easy to learn but very challenging to master. Benefits include improved reaction time, hand-eye coordination, concentration and focus.

FRED GLADDIS/ENTERPRISE PHOTO

## What GPA does a student need to get into college?

“Is my GPA good enough?” is a common refrain in my line of work. I wish it were easier to answer this question conclusively, but it depends.

College selectivity, intended major, rigor of high school course load — for example, did the student move up to higher levels such as calculus and AP physics — and competitiveness of other applicants affect what GPA is “good enough.” In a nutshell, here's what you need to know.

### How colleges assess GPA

There is inconsistency in how colleges assess GPA since there are different types of GPA that colleges consider. In general, the differences are due to the following:

1. **Weighted vs. unweighted:** Weighted GPA rewards students for taking accelerated classes by providing additional points for each honors/AP class taken. Some schools fully weight GPA whereas others like the UCs cap at eight the number of additional points awarded. An unweighted GPA contains no additional points for accelerated classes.

2. **Which years count:** University of California and California State University count grades earned only in 10th and 11th grades. Private colleges tend to count grades from ninth grade through fall of senior year.

3. **Which courses count:** Many colleges include grades from only core subjects, but there is variation in what is considered core. The UCs and CSUs count grades only from classes that satisfy a-g subject requirements.

### Why are there differences in GPA calculations?

The reason for this maddening array of ways to calculate



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GPA is primarily because high schools do not use a uniform system to calculate and report grades — some include every class, some don't use pluses and minuses, etc.

Additionally, grades from one high school are not necessarily comparable to grades from another. In order to compare apples to apples, many colleges actually recalculate students' GPA based on their own college-specific guidelines ... information not readily available to applicants. Also, to help provide context for GPA, colleges require high school counselors to submit a school profile that details, among other things, the school's grading system and number of honors/AP classes offered.

### The bottom line regarding GPA

Nowadays, most colleges and universities conduct a holistic or comprehensive review of both personal and academic achievement that encompasses grades along with test scores, extracurriculars, etc. However, transcripts are an integral part — if not the most important part — of a student's application because they show a student's determination, motivation and time-management skills over time. Studies show that high school grades used alone are the single best predictor of success at most colleges, although there are exceptions. (For more information, see [http://cshe.berkeley.edu/publications/docs/ROPS.GEISER\\_SAT\\_6.12.07.pdf](http://cshe.berkeley.edu/publications/docs/ROPS.GEISER_SAT_6.12.07.pdf))

berkeley.edu/publications/docs/ROPS.GEISER\_SAT\_6.12.07.pdf)

### GPA's at various colleges

Most highly selective schools with single-digit acceptance rates have an average weighted GPA of more than 4.0. For example, 74 percent of Stanford's 2013 freshman class had a 4.0 or better.

The UCs (and most public out-of-state schools) require a minimum GPA of 3.0 for eligibility, but applying with a 3.0 doesn't guarantee admission. The CSUs use an eligibility index that combines high school GPA with standardized test scores. The lower the GPA, the higher the test scores required. (See the chart at [https://secure.csumentor.edu/planning/high\\_school/cal\\_residents.asp](https://secure.csumentor.edu/planning/high_school/cal_residents.asp))

Community colleges do not consider GPA aside from requiring a high school diploma or its equivalent.

To be specific, here are some average high school GPAs for admitted students at different colleges/universities based on the most recent data available.

■ **UCs:** Average weighted GPA varied from 4.18 at UC Berkeley to 4.01 at UC Santa Barbara to 3.84 at UC Santa Cruz (<http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/files/uc-freshman-application-data.pdf>).

■ **CSUs:** Average weighted GPA of 3.96 at Cal Poly (<http://admissions.calpoly.edu/prospectiv/profile.html>); to 3.76 at San Diego State University (<http://arweb.sdsu.edu/es/admissions/facts.html>).

■ **University of Oregon's** average unweighted GPA was 3.57 (<http://admissions.uoregon.edu/profile.html>).

### GPA mottos

In a nutshell, there is not always a clear-cut answer to the question about what GPA is good enough. The goal is to balance taking challenging courses with maintaining a solid GPA. What does this really mean?

1. Take classes that **demonstrate the ability to handle increasing rigor**.
2. **Aim for an upward trend** in grades.
3. A high GPA with a less challenging course pattern is not viewed as favorably as a **mixed GPA with a more challenging course pattern**.
4. **Do not slack off** senior year.
5. **Explain on applications any grades** that do not reflect your ability.
6. Keep in mind that it's not just about GPA. **Get involved**, be yourself, try to enjoy high school.

■ **USC's** average unweighted GPA of admitted students was 3.82 (<http://www.usc.edu/admission/undergraduate/apply/documents/FreshmanProfile2013FINAL.pdf>).

### Until next time

I feel compelled to apologize if all this talk of grades has “graded” on your nerves. Just remember that with about 2,300 four-year, not-for-profit higher education entities in the United States, there is a right college out there for you!

— Jennifer Borenstein is an independent college adviser in Davis and owner of *The Right College For You*. Her column is published on the last Tuesday of the month. She lives in Davis with her family. Reach her at [jenniferborenstein@therightcollegeforyou.org](mailto:jenniferborenstein@therightcollegeforyou.org), or visit [www.therightcollegeforyou.org](http://www.therightcollegeforyou.org).