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US Physics Team trains at UC Santa Barbara

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In a first for the campus, UC Santa Barbara is hosting the U.S. Physics Team as it prepares for the 2023 International Physics Olympiad in Tokyo.

Team director [Tengiz Bibilashvili](#), a senior lecturer in UCSB's Department of Physics and within the College of Creative Studies, is prepping his team of five high school students with a summer minicamp on campus before their departure to Japan. The event includes labs and a number of lectures. The incoming physics department chair, David Stuart, has organized events for the team, including meeting with Professor Lars Bildsten, director of the Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics, and Nobel Laureate David Gross.

"Our students have most of their advanced experience in problem solving, rather than experimental physics," Bibilashvili said. "The minicamp focuses on labs and spirit. They will conduct five labs, including one designed by Professor Everett Lipman, who himself was on the same team many years ago."

Bibilashvili [was tapped to be the academic director](#) of the team, a position equivalent to head coach, at the beginning of 2022. Hailing from the Republic of Georgia, he participated in math and physics Olympiads as a youth, going on to establish the Georgian National Olympiads.

Georgia began sending teams to the International Physics Olympiads after it gained independence from the Soviet Union. Bibilashvili served as the team's lead coach at the 1998 International Physics Olympiad in Reykjavik, Iceland, and continued coaching teams until he immigrated to the U.S. in 2002.

Three of the U.S. team's six junior coaches also have ties to UC Santa Barbara. Kellan Colburn is a doctoral student jointly appointed at UCSB and Caltech, who studies photonics and quantum optics. Sam Gebretsadkan just finished his Ph.D. on quantum computing and precision measurement at UCSB. And Natalie LeBaron earned her bachelor's degree in physics from UCSB before continuing on to pursue her doctorate at UC Berkeley.

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The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we

draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.