



The Mission of the University of Richmond Debate Program

Debate's long history in pedagogical method, the training of democratic citizenship and the critical assessment of a proposition all contribute to the mission of the debate program at the University of Richmond. The debate program provides an arena for students to improve and implement their research skills, critical thinking and public speaking. The debate program also aims to enhance students' skills in policy construction, argumentation and advocacy. Toward these ends, the program competes at the highest levels of national competition while continuing to exercise an "open door" policy for students with little or no debate experience. The mission, in sum, is to pursue the debate program's objectives in an attempt to establish at the University of Richmond one of the most rigorous and successful debate teams in the country on all levels of competition, and provide the best environment for debaters with varying levels of experience.

The History of Debate

Initially, a small number of debate societies were formed in this country. Early debate societies, loosely tied together through colleges, were organized like clubs or groups, not teams or squads. These groups typically debated among themselves and in public debates involving topics of the day. Slowly, the various debate societies around the country began to link up with one another to create unions and leagues for debate. In the early 1900s, led by the United States military academies at West Point and Annapolis, a new form of debate

emerged based more on policy research centered on a proposition. One resolution would be researched and debated each season, culminating in a national debate tournament. This type of policy debate has since been associated with communication departments and student associations at universities.

Debate at Richmond

The University of Richmond has supported a successful debate program for many years. Cross-examination debate (an eight-round style of debate involving two competing teams of two) is the primary avenue of program interest. Students with experience in individual events (including Lincoln-Douglas debate or extemporaneous speech) or other styles of debating (parliamentary debate, etc.) have had great success adapting to two-person policy debate here at Richmond. The program is open to all students, regardless of experience, and fields teams in all levels of competition. Debaters attend both regional and national tournaments, and renewed emphasis is being placed on qualification for the National Debate Tournament (NDT). Additionally, the program sponsors the Jay Weinberg Fall Classic debate tournament, an intercollegiate, eight-round national tournament that annually draws the top debaters from across the country to Richmond. The program has been extremely fortunate to have received recent support in both the expansion of the tournament and the 2003 opening of the new Debate Center in Weinstein Hall.

Tournament Schedule

Georgia State
Gonzaga
University of Kentucky
University of Richmond
Towson
West Virginia
Catholic University–Capitol Cities
Harvard University
Liberty University
Wake Forest University
Texas Swing
University of West Georgia
United States Naval Academy
Northwestern University
Southeast CEDA Regionals
District 7 NDT Qualifier
National Debate Tournament (NDT)
Cross-Examination Debate Association
National Tournament (CEDA)

Coaching

The director of debate is **Dr. Kevin Kuswa**. Dr. Kuswa is a former winner of the National Debate Tournament (1992), and he coached Dartmouth (1993) and Texas (1996 and 2000) to their respective first- and third-place national championships.

In addition to Dr. Kuswa, the program features an assistant director of debate who also teaches for the Department of Rhetoric and Communications Studies. The program also is fortunate to have the assistance of a number of former debaters from the nearby area. The team also hires part-time coaches and judges to assist at tournaments. Finally, debaters contribute to the education and advancement of one another through scrimmage competition and weekly practice sessions.

Benefits to Debate

The most significant aspect of debate concerns its pedagogical angle. In keeping with the goals of a liberal education, debate promotes an enhanced capacity to reason, evaluate and critique the concepts of the self and others so as to come to an educated conclusion. Debate is a self-driven path toward developing citizenship—articulate and educated students capable of formulating and addressing opinions in a meaningful way.

The debate program is always pleased to assist its members in pursuing summer activities that benefit the attendee and the program at large. Stipends and scholarships are available for study and participation in debate camps, research activities and other forms of debate.

Team Composition and Recent Successes

More than 20 members comprise the Spider debate team. The squad is evenly split between men and women, and more than half of the debaters are University Scholars. In the National Debate Tournament varsity competition, the team has moved into the top 50 programs in the country and the top five in the Mid-Atlantic region. Richmond has qualified a team to the NDT for the past five seasons, including the University's first ever two-team contingent to nationals during the 2005–2006 season. In addition, debaters from Richmond have consistently reached the elimination rounds at Catholic University, University of West Virginia, Liberty University, United States

Naval Academy, the University of Texas at Dallas and at a number of other tournaments.

The team has developed an outstanding support structure through the School of Arts and Sciences, the Department of Rhetoric and Communication Studies and a number of friends and alumni of the program, including the Weinberg and Weinstein families. Our success continues to grow and our goal of becoming one of the premier debate programs for all levels of experience has been materialized.