

**Sparking the Debate:  
How to Create a Debate Program**



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**Alfred Charles Snider**

**International Debate Education Association**

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## *Dedications*

To Bojana Skrt, who has served as my companion, coach, and trainer for more than 10 years.

To Sarah Jane Green, who has been my inspiration and my challenge since she was born.

To all my teachers, who offered so much and from whom I took what I could.

To all my students, who have become my teachers.

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# Preface

The world is confronted by many challenges, including climate change, economic disparities, ethnic disputes, and threats to human rights. Rather than tackling these problems individually, many people around the world are beginning to focus on more generalized paths toward possible solutions. How we deal with one another is obviously key to how we address our problems, because, at the most basic level, almost all problems are linked to the difficulties we have in relating to others.

Debate is one possible avenue of helping people interact with one another and address mutual problems. It is by no means a “magic bullet” for dealing with our difficulties, however, but it can help us address issues constructively. Using debate, we can work together to develop better policies and solutions through open, logical, and critical discourse. An “argument” is not a bad thing when it refers to a logical process of testing ideas rather than to a situation of disagreement. A “debate” is not a contest of empty rhetoric when it sets the stage for developing new ideas and building new coalitions to find solutions to the world’s problems.

*Sparking the Debate* is designed to help you create a debate community to enable you to take the ideas of constructive human communication and apply them to your situation in the search for a better neighborhood, community, and world. This kind of communication can be a light in the problem-filled darkness of the twenty-first century, but it takes a spark

to create that light and a commitment to nourish that light until it can illuminate as many aspects of human society as possible. This book is an attempt to help you create that spark where you are. Within the sound of your voice and the reach of your hands, you can use some of these techniques to create hope. I am not sure that they will always work or that it will help the human race avoid self-destruction, but, in a difficult situation, all we have is hope. But hope will only suffice if we link it to a solid plan to accomplish our goals.





## CHAPTER 1

# The Need for Spark

Before we begin discussing the practical elements of how to build a program of debating activities, we need to establish what debate is and why it is important both to education and to civil society. Understanding the characteristics and function of debate and its potential will help you determine the parameters of your program and articulate why you are undertaking this complex task.

## Debate and Civil Society

Communication is an important part of any civil society, and it needs to be open and operate in the best interests of all. The ancient rhetorical theories of Kemet (Egypt) claim that humans have the power of speech so that they can bring good into the world. Engaging in debate can help us achieve this goal. Debating enables people to:

- *Find their public voice.* When we express ourselves, we are fulfilling a basic need. Yet, a surprising number of people are afraid to speak in public. Debating helps us overcome this fear. And, when we overcome our fears, when we realize that we have something to say, and when we learn that

others may even be willing to listen, we have found “our voice.” We are able to share ideas and engage with others. We are not just observers within the human community, but participants.

- *Invigorate democracy.* Democracy is based on the assumption that power rests with the people, and that the people determine the goals of government. For the people to play their role effectively, they must be informed about issues. They must actively seek information, evaluate it critically, and voice their opinion. Freedom of speech is useless if no one has anything to say, and the right to vote is has no value unless you’re voting for something you know about and believe in.

Participating in debate and debate-related activities trains individuals to become engaged citizens and to critically evaluate issues as a matter of course. The increase in global academic debating activities and trainings is one sign that young people are eager to take up their civic role. Whether at universities in Malaysia, middle schools in Los Angeles, or in debate clubs in Macedonia, millions of students on every continent are finding their voices and learning how to use them.

- *Empower themselves to advocate for change.* Many believe that they cannot influence the swirl of events in the new, globalized public arena. Debate can change this perspective. Debaters learn how to collect and evaluate information. As they debate, they encounter new ideas that enrich their understanding of issues and new arguments that challenge their own ideas. They learn to critically analyze the ideas of others and to advocate for their own. They can take the skills they have learned in debate and use them to advocate for change in their communities and the larger world.

But debaters learn more than skills; they also learn attitudes. Debaters learn to cooperate in order to compete. They discover that disagreement is not about division and separation but about finding the best solution to a problem. This attitude is central to making positive changes in society.

- *Oppose illogical advocacy.* The vast majority of public advocacy today lacks grounding in logic. Too often we hear candidates offering slogans rather than substance. Debate challenges simplistic and illogical public dialogue and promotes critical thinking. By encouraging debaters to look carefully at the root cause of problems and understand the biases of those offering opinions, debate helps people analyze issues and evaluate possible solutions to problems.
- *Address shortcomings in educational systems.* We are all familiar with the many criticisms of modern education. Our current system emphasizes acquiring facts rather than developing skills. It views students as passive recipients of information who are told to keep quiet and learn by listening. They are to accept what comes from the teacher as unassailable fact, not question or find fault with what is offered. They “learn it once” and move on.

This system must change if we are to prepare young people for the world they will face. Education should be student-centered, with an emphasis on teaching skills. Classrooms should be “noisy” environments as students research, exchange, and evaluate ideas. Engaging in debate can help transform the classroom. By its very nature, debate is student-centered and focused on critical thinking and the exchange of ideas.

## Learning Through Discourse

Debate and discussion have proved to be very valuable education techniques because students are not passive listeners but participants in the activity. When students are actively involved, the possibilities for learning and growth increase. Students engage in higher-order thinking that involves analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Strategies promoting active learning have people both doing and thinking about what they are doing. As educators Charles Bonwell and James Eison conclude:

Use of these techniques in the classroom is vital because of their powerful impact upon students' learning. For example, several studies have shown that students prefer strategies promoting active learning to traditional lectures. Other research studies evaluating students' achievement have demonstrated that many strategies promoting active learning are comparable to lectures in promoting the mastery of content but superior to lectures in promoting the development of students' skills in thinking and writing (1991, 2).

## Characteristics of Debate and Debate Activities

Debate and debate-related activities come in many forms, but all involve:

- *Thinking*. Debate takes an idea and pursues its different possibilities, applications, and meanings. It uses communication to change attitudes and beliefs.
- *Speaking*. The act of speaking is itself important. When we speak an idea, we make it real to others. The ancient civilization of Kemet called this the generative power of the

word, or “Nommo.” (Karenga 2003, 8) When those who listen hear what is spoken, they create a reality that they understand, even if it may be slightly different from the reality that the speaker intended.

- *Listening.* Speakers must be conscious of their audience, but those listening also have a responsibility. They should evaluate both the content of the message and its source, as well understand the context of the content (see Changingminds.org, [http://changingminds.org/techniques/listening/critical\\_listening.htm](http://changingminds.org/techniques/listening/critical_listening.htm)). Most of us need to learn how to listen more effectively. Listening takes focus, energy, and practice to do well—debate helps improve listening skills.
- *Criticizing.* In a formal debate, one side is expected to criticize the ideas of the other, while, in a discussion, criticism may be part of the exchange of ideas. Often, we view anyone who criticizes us as an opponent or “enemy,” but we all are helped when people focus their abilities on analyzing ideas and problems.
- *Disagreeing constructively.* A truly open and productive discussion or debate requires criticism that is constructive. Constructive disagreement can achieve meaningful results when ideas are tested and the best are selected. When I was in Korea in the late 1990s, the prime minister told me that his staff was always trying to determine what he thought and then fall into line with his ideas, whereas he wanted them to rigorously test his ideas and present and defend alternative perspectives. He told me, “I don’t want my answer, I already know that, I want the best answer.” This is the essence of how disagreement can be constructive. Often criticism that we view as harsh at the time can help us define our challenges and our goals. Whether we

accept it as new information or as a challenge to be overcome, criticism can help us (Plante 2012).

- *Making Decisions.* Debate trains people to make decisions both after deep analysis (as in the case of developing arguments) and extemporaneously (when refuting the opposition)—what arguments to present, what evidence to use, how to respond to an opponent. Research indicates that practice in making decisions helps young people make better decisions and avoid major problems in their lives (Elias, Branden-Muller & Sayette 1991).

## Defining Debate Activities

“Debate,” as we will use the term, encompasses a wide variety of activities, most of which fall into two broad categories:

- *Discussions:* A discussion is different from a conversation. A conversation is an informal exchange of sentiments, opinions, or ideas. A discussion, on the other hand, is more formal. Discussion involves a set topic, although the topic may be relatively broad and loosely defined. Discussions generally take place in a small group (3–8 people) so that each person has an opportunity to speak. Discussions don’t impose formal time limits on speakers, although it is assumed that no one person will dominate the discussion.<sup>1</sup> Often a chair gently guides the process to make sure

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1. The Saskatoon (Canada) school system encourages teachers to use discussions to explore topics. Their definition is: A discussion is an oral exploration of a topic, object, concept or experience. All learners need frequent opportunities to generate and share their questions and ideas in small and whole class settings. Teachers who encourage and accept students’ questions and comments without judgment and clarify understandings by paraphrasing difficult terms stimulate the exchange of ideas. (<http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/de/pd/instr/strats/discussion/>)

that all are heard and that participants do not stray too far from the topic.

- *Formal debates.* Formal debates are structured events in which opposing sides have an equal opportunity to present their views on a selected topic before a decision-making body. Those who are making a decision may either be doing so formally, by voting, or informally by deciding personally what they think of the proceedings.

Of course, debate can take many other forms. A mock trial simulates an actual trial. Model United Nations simulates a meeting of the UN, while at a Student Congress, high school students, like members of the United States Congress, debate bills and resolutions.

All debates or discussions depend on the presence of four characteristics of argument:

1. *Development*, through which arguments are advanced and supported.
2. *Clash*, through which arguments are properly disputed.
3. *Extension*, through which arguments are defended against refutation.
4. *Perspective*, through which individual arguments are related to the larger question at hand (Branham 1991, 22).

Certainly you can have a debate or discussion minus one of these, but the quality would suffer.

When staging events, remember that there is no one perfect form of debate. You can, and should, integrate various activities. For example, a short public debate might be followed by questions from the audience, a public discussion, or even formal speeches by members of the audience. I urge

you to keep your focus on the basic processes, not the specific format. As long as the event contains the four characteristics listed above and holds the interest of the audience and participants, it is appropriate.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has talked about what debate is and why people can benefit from debating. The global reality is that students, teachers, community members, activists, and citizens are finding these activities exciting, fun, and highly productive. The rapid growth of these communication techniques is encouraging. That is why I have written this book.

If you see some merit in what I have said, then it is time for a spark.

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## CHAPTER 2

# Phases of Development and Implementation

Kim Giffin, a widely respected communications scholar from the University of Kansas and one of my favorite professors in graduate school, used to tell us, “If you aim at nothing, you will surely hit it.” Planning is especially important when starting a debate group because the program will develop over time and may involve a number of people, many of whom may be at distances from one another.

This chapter is not about taking your first steps in setting up your program, rather it addresses planning for those first steps. You need to determine where you are going before you decide how to get there and take your first steps toward your goal.

### **The Road to Success**

The path to a flourishing debate program is not short; it is long and winding and takes time to traverse. You cannot wave a magic wand, hope for the best, and presto, a successful a debate club emerges. You need to plan the program, introduce

it, nurture it, and help it grow. Progress is incremental; it takes place one step at a time.

The path to your goal will not be straight. Your earlier ideas may not work or you may run into unanticipated difficulties, so you will have to be flexible. Don't be afraid to change plans. Remember, you need to be single-minded about your goal, not how you achieve it.

## **Learning Where You Are**

For your program to succeed, you must know the community in which you will establish it. I have conducted debate training in 41 countries, but never without local partners. Knowing the people, the institutions, customs, and the way people in your community actually communicate is essential for success.

If you are not familiar with the community, you have some homework to do. Identify and learn about the major players: schools, community groups, political parties, business associations, nongovernmental organizations, and others who might be interested in supporting your program. Become aware of the intellectual landscape and the nature of discourse—what people talk about, how they talk about different issues, and who they talk to about what. Each society has a distinct speech culture with which you must interact and to which you must adapt—the more you know about it, the better you can structure an appropriate program.

## **Learn About What Others Are Doing**

Before you begin planning your program, you also need to learn about what is happening in the debate world. You need to learn both about debate groups and activities and about the theory and practice of debate.

Focus your research on local activities and also on regional and global ones. You have much to learn from groups near you, who could become your partners, but you may also learn much from debating activities around the world and may gain a creative spark from what they are doing. You don't have to "reinvent the wheel." If a group has already done what you wish to do, adapt their program to your situation—and remember to give them credit for their ideas.

You can find information on what others are doing from a variety of sources, including:

- *Websites.* Obviously, the Internet is an invaluable source of information—both for locating debate-related groups and activities and learning about debate and debate training in general. The International Debate Education Association has conducted a global census of university debating societies (<http://idebate.org/publications/idea-global-debate-census-2011>). If you are not in a university setting, you will have to do some research to determine what debate groups are active in your area.

Once you have located potentially useful groups, contact them and ask questions about organization, format, events, and participants as well as how you can engage in partnerships.

A number of websites can provide you general information on debate. These include (in descending order of utility):

- International Debate Education Association (<http://idebate.org/>): networks debating programs from all around the world. You can spend quite a bit of time exploring here.
- Debate Central (<http://debate.uvm.edu/>): provides instructional materials, a text library, videos, and

networking opportunities. This site has links to other related sites as well as hundreds of debate training videos.

- English-Speaking Union (<http://www.esu.org/programmes/schools>): deals with the work of this U.K. charity in many nations around the world. While its general purpose is to improve understanding through the English language, it also sponsors many debate and related events.
- National Forensic League (<http://www.nflonline.org/>): promotes and supports debate and public speaking activities in high schools in the United States and other countries. It offers many different types of debate and public speaking events.
- Claremont Colleges Debate Union (<http://www.cmc.edu/forensics/>): has had considerable success in creating new debating activities in middle schools, high schools, and communities.
- Middle School Public Debate Program (<http://middleschooldebate.com/index.htm>): sponsored by the Claremont Colleges, this organization has started successful debating programs in many middle schools in many parts of the United States and is now branching out to other countries.
- Public Debate Program (<http://highschooldebate.org/>): the high school version of the above Claremont Colleges program.
- World Schools Debating Championships (<http://www.schoolsdebate.com/>): stages an annual event in which one team from each member nation competes for the world championship in native speakers of English and

English as a second and foreign language categories. The site lists countries that participate and thus can give you an idea of whether other schools in your country are debating.

These sites have different perspectives on debate, so you have an opportunity to find what works for you.

If you want a list of possible debate formats see Appendix 1. If you want to view one of these formats on video, you can view them at any of the following sites: <http://debate.uvm.edu/learndebate.html> <http://debatevideoblog.blogspot.com/>; <http://idebate.org/media> <https://vimeo.com/user1244229/channels>

- *Books and Articles.* Countless books and publications about debate and related activities have been published. It would be impossible to provide guides to all of them, but here are some tips for finding some of them:
  - Debate Library (<http://debate.uvm.edu/dcdebatelibrary.html>) offers resources on many different debate formats.
  - International Debate Education Association (<http://idebate.org/publications>) provides many instructional manuals and works related to debate. Many are available free for downloading from the website.
- *News Reports.* Here are some of the online news sources that can help you keep up-to-date with the world of debating.(from most to least comprehensive)
  - Global Debate (<http://globaldebateblog.blogspot.com/>) publishes news stories of interest to those involved in debating.



- World Debating News from IDEA (<http://idebate.org/worlddebating>): publishes news stories of interest to debaters.
- Achte Minute (<http://www.achteminute.de/?lang=en>) focuses on European debating. (Also available in German.)
- European Debating (<http://europeandebating.blogspot.com/>) documents European tournaments and their motions.
- Debate Motion Central (<http://debatemotioncentral.blogspot.com/>) gathers debate motions and topics from all round the world and, as of 2012, had them from more than 250 tournaments.
- The Debating News (<http://thedeбatingnews.com>) is a less frequent debate news service that focuses on Asia.
- Rostrum Magazine (<http://www.nflonline.org/Rostrum.Rostrum>), published by the National Forensic League (NFL), offers news about NFL events and competitions as well as some instructional materials in different speech and debate formats and events. Download is free.

## **Contact Mentors and Solicit Advice**

In your exploration of all of these debate materials and websites, you will come across individuals who might be able to help you. I urge you to reach out to them. Many people are involved in debating because they love it and are committed to it, and thus will be happy to advise you. Don't listen

to just one voice, but contact several people for their assistance and advice.

While there is no comprehensive list of possible mentors, you can often find them by researching who is already participating in major debate organizations. Organizations you should investigate include (in terms of size of effort and outreach)

- International Debate Education Association (<http://idebate.org>)
- World Debate Institute (<http://debate.uvm.edu/debateblog/wdi/Welcome.html>)
- Debate Academy Movement ([http://debateacademy.net/Debate\\_Academy/Welcome.html](http://debateacademy.net/Debate_Academy/Welcome.html))
- English-Speaking Union (<http://www.esu.org/>)

Debating and promoting debating is about working with others. It is a bit strange that in the world of competitive debate we need to cooperate, but it could be one of the important truths you will realize from participation in this activity. Find other people, learn from them, and, where possible, work with them.

## **Identify Participants**

The most important resource you have is people. Interested people will get you through times of low funding better than funding will get you through times of low interest. If people are excited about what you're doing, they will find a way to make things happen. If you have funding, you may be able to attract people by offering financial rewards, but that will not make the program sustainable or healthy. The global debating

landscape is littered with failed programs that forgot to cultivate and nourish human resources.

As you begin planning your first steps, think about the people you will need. These include four groups: central organizers, active participants, interested populations, and extended populations.

### **CENTRAL ORGANIZERS**

Central organizers are those who will be most active in your program. They are individuals who are willing to dedicate themselves to the group—to plan, implement, and evaluate the program—and to take personal responsibility for making things happen.

One person can lead a program, but not effectively. You need a core group to work with you, not as your followers, but as your teammates. This group is not defined by titles or privileges, but by their commitment and the positive regard of others. With them, you can achieve your goals; without them, you'll get nowhere. They may be your friends or associates, they may be people you have just met or know about. Regardless of your initial connection to them, you must develop a close working relationship and build a network among central organizers.

Begin looking for central organizers as soon as you can. While you gather information, while you discuss your ideas with your friends, always look for such individuals. Ask them to join you in planning activities and encourage them to view the project as their own as much as it is yours.

When looking for people to be central organizers, utilize the Kemetite principle of “Nommo,” the generative power of the word. Share your ideas and dreams with potential central organizers and invite them to work with you. Ask them to become equals with you in the program, not your assistants

or helpers. If they want to begin in a subsidiary role, let them; but make them full participants as soon as possible.

As you assemble your team, interest them in the ideas that you beginning to form, learn from what they say, and then join with them in planning your program. Once a critical mass of people begins talking about something, plans become events, intentions become behavior, and words become reality. To spark this process, you need to be full of energy, optimism, and a willingness to share ideas and listen to others. Central organizers must share your goal, but they do not have to agree with all your ideas. It is called “debate,” not “agree.” When cordial and respectful, creative disagreement can be quite productive.

Never take credit for success; always give it to others. Always take blame for shortcomings; never lay blame on your organizers. Looking to lay blame often stands in the way of effective problem solving.

Expand the group of central organizers whenever you can productively do so. As your program grows, you can divide duties and responsibilities, but, in the beginning, a lack of hierarchy promotes a sense of ownership among the group.

### **ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS**

Active participants are those who will receive your direct attention. After the central organizers, these people are the heart of your program. They will become your debaters, speakers, trainers, and ambassadors to all other interested individuals and groups. Concentrate your early training on them. Give them lots of positive feedback and offer public recognition when you can.

Focusing your attention on this group will benefit your program both in the short term and in the long term. You will be teaching them skills that will help them be more successful

and productive even after they have left active debating. They will not forget who taught them. Often those who didn't seem to benefit the most as active debaters are those who are the most grateful later. Some of my program's biggest supporters, both personally and financially, are those I would not have predicted. The good that you do now will come back to you in its own sweet time.

### **INTERESTED POPULATIONS**

Interested populations are those who may become aware of your activities and attend some of your events. They are important to you because they create awareness of and goodwill toward your program. If they attend one of your public debates, they may say nice things about it to friends or attend another event. They may encourage their children to become involved.—They may hear about you in a newspaper article or from an early radio broadcast or news story, and this may spark their interest.

You never know when one of these individuals may become inspired to become an active participant or even a central organizer. They may not have the time to participate, but they may become a financial sponsor or contribute in some other way to one of your events. Cultivating interested populations is never time wasted. It pays off in ways you cannot (and may not) be aware of.

Publicity and outreach to interested populations is very important—not only for your group but for society in general. An insulated, isolated debating program that few are aware of is not living up to its potential. Just the knowledge that your kinds of activities are taking place makes a difference in society. When people see that what you are doing is possible, they gain confidence in what they can do.

## **EXTENDED POPULATIONS**

This group may not know of your activities but may still benefit. When a public debate prompts policymakers to rethink their plans, when a debate team raises the prestige of their school, when a newly trained debater goes into business and becomes successful, many people benefit.

Your activities are important because of their potential influence on society. Yes, specific individuals will become involved and benefit, but the true measure of what you have done is realized when you ask yourself, “Is our society better because of what we are doing?” If the answer is yes, then you are accomplishing one of your most important goals.

## **Setting Goals**

Before you begin organizing your program, you must determine your objectives. You can adjust these as the program evolves, but setting goals is essential for planning and understanding the amount of work involved to achieve them.

You should consider six types of closely related goals: participant, training, activity, contact and follow-up, expansion, timeline. I’ve separated them below, but they are actually closely related.

## **PARTICIPANT GOALS**

Gaining participants is vital to the success of your organization. Participants can be divided into two groups: speakers and audiences. Speakers are those you wish to have actively involved in your program. They will be trained, practice, and then perform in various activities. They might be students, teachers, political activists, policymakers, members of the business community, retirees, those in nongovernmental organizations, or simply average citizens. Audiences are those you

wish to attend and appreciate debates. These would include the same groups as above, but might also include potential sponsors and financial supporters.

Narrow your targeted speaker groups early on—but not your audiences. Speakers take up much more of your energies and are much harder to recruit than audiences. Think about who will be involved, what they are going to do, and where they can be deployed to catch the interest of others. Who you want to reach and how you want them involved influence many of your later choices, including the kinds of activities you choose. Speakers must make a personal commitment to your activities and thus need more enticement and training. Audiences require less investment, and so you can cast a broader net. Audience members may like what they hear and may become involved themselves. They often watch an event and think, “I could do that,” and are thus ready to become transformed, with a little training, into speakers.

## **TRAINING GOALS**

Most likely the people participating in your program will have no experience in debate and so will need training. Plan the types and levels of instruction you will offer and determine who will do the training. Trainers should be highly motivated; for basic topics, however, they don't need to be experts in debate. Initially, the burden will fall on you and your central organizers. As your program grows, you can focus on creating more trainers.

Two guides can help you prepare to train. The second half of *Voices in the Sky* (<http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Voices%20in%20the%20sky.pdf>) is a very basic outline of how to train debaters that is not format-specific. Many Sides: Debate Across the Curriculum (<http://debate.uvm.edu/>)

edu/dcpdf/Many\_Sides\_2nd\_ed.pdf ) also has some general guidelines for training classroom teachers.

The kind of training you offer will depend on your goals. Some topics are appropriate no matter what your objectives but some are specialized. Here is a list of topics, ranked from broadly applicable to most specialized:

- *Why Get Involved: The Benefits of Debate.* A short session encouraging people to try the activity.
- *Public Speaking: Basic Guidelines.* Necessary for almost all activities and, contrary to popular belief, it can be fun.
- *Building an Argument: How to Present a Compelling Idea in an Oral Framework.* Advice on how to structure an argument and reach audiences with substantive ideas.
- *Types and Tests of Arguments.* What is an argument, examination of inductive and deductive argument types, and how to test such arguments. This is easy if you use lots of everyday examples.
- *Refutation.* Answering arguments made by another person. This topic should also include an exploration of common argument fallacies.
- *Format for a Debate.* An explanation of the debate format or formats you will be using.
- *Motion Analysis.* How to analyze a topic or debate motion to identify the major issues. This is best taught using a variety of motions or topics and may include some training in brainstorming.
- *Debate Strategy.* What to do and what to avoid in the presentation and execution of arguments. This topic is most useful for those engaged in competitive debating. The content depends on the format selected.



- *Decision Making.* How to frame arguments in a comparative way so that the audience or judges can make a decision. This topic can be useful once your debaters are beyond basic training.
- *Persuasion.* Introduction to basic persuasion theory and how to use persuasion. This is useful during more advanced training.
- *Organizing and Hosting Events.* How to plan and run a debate-related event. This is useful for those interested in staging a public debate, tournament, or training session.
- *Preparing Trainers.* Preparing experienced trainers to train others. This course would include how to plan and organize a group such as yours.
- *Tournament Tabulation.* How to process results in a tournament. This training should orient participants to the various software programs available for this task.

Remember that all training needs to be active: participants must be “doing,” not just being told what to do. Integrate drills and exercises into the sessions so students can put abstract principles into practice. We will explain all of these training exercises in Chapter 7.

Have two central organizers at each of your first few training sessions: one conducts the training, the other assists. They can support each other as well as provide effective feedback on how the training went. In this way, trainers can learn how to train while they offer trainings.

### **ACTIVITY GOALS**

Initially, you will focus on recruitment and training but don't delay staging events that showcase what you are doing. This

will create excitement about your program and help you with recruiting.

Consider the following activities

- *Recruitment and orientation events.* To tell people about your plans and ask them to join you.
- *Basic skills training sessions.* You will use these to teach basic skills; they can also be used as outreach events. For example, you can offer public speaking training to members of other community, business or professional groups who may become interested populations or even sponsors.
- *Public showcase events.* Have your group stage discussions or debates on topics of interest at schools or in front of community groups to showcase what you are doing and to recruit additional members.
- *More advanced training sessions.* Offer more advanced instruction for those who have received basic skills training.
- *Public speaking contests for students or other young people.* Organize contests around popular topics and award small prizes to those who perform well.
- *Major showcase events.* These are events to which you invite extended audiences (media, potential partners, etc.) to come and observe. They could be a discussion featuring members as well as experts and interested parties from the community or they might be a public debate on an issue of interest.
- *Debate tournaments.* To introduce the concept of competition, hold a simple tournament. Your members don't need to be expert debaters, basic training will suffice. You can offer more advanced, competitive tournaments as their skills develop.

- *Workshops.* Hold a workshop over a weekend or during a time when people are available as a way to concentrate training and skill-building activities. Many workshops conclude with a small tournament. You can also offer workshops to groups who have expressed interest in your activities.
- *Media events.* Use media as the “stage” for an event. For example, you might have two members engage in a very short radio debate on a hot topic and then invite listeners to call in with questions and opinions. Likewise, you might offer paired short articles on two sides of a hot issue to a local newspaper or a website. In the United States, public access television has proved extremely useful by providing an inexpensive and often readily available media forum. These public access stations are often looking for solid citizen programming, and you will find that you can provide what they are looking for.

### **CONTACT AND FOLLOW-UP GOALS**

One-time communication fails to generate the levels of involvement you are looking for, so, early on, plan how you intend to initiate and maintain contact with those who have expressed interest in your program. Whenever you hold an event, gather the names and email addresses (and other contact data such as addresses and telephone numbers) of those attending. Later, contact them and encourage them to get involved in further activities. People like to know that they are wanted and recognized. If someone has been attending your events and then stops, a message that “we miss you” can also be encouraging. Take the initiative to reach out to and keep people involved.

Create a central database of all individuals involved in your program and of those who have attended your events—update

it regularly. This recordkeeping may seem like an extra burden, but it will make inviting people to future events much easier. Make an additional list of all media outlets and groups with which you might want to be in contact.

Communication is essential for developing your society. Communicate often, substantively, and effectively to produce good results.

### **EXPANSION GOALS**

After you have found your participants, begun your activities, and solidified your base of support, you should consider how you want to grow. While these ideas should not be overly specific or set in stone during the initial planning phase, they are useful to keep in mind as you move forward.

You can expand in several ways:

- *Add activities.* If your initial activities are generating interest, add some additional activities. If your public debates are successful, consider staging a small competitive debate tournament. If debate tournaments are going well, think about creating a debate league.
- *Add new groups of participants.* If your activities in the community are working well, consider expanding to a high school or university. If your activities with the general public are successful, consider approaching professionals or policymakers.
- *Expand into new geographic areas.* If your activities in one city are working well, branch out to a neighboring city. If your activities at one school are working well, consider branching out to another school in a nearby town.

You might try two or all three of these expansion alternatives, but be cautious—avoid trying to do too much too soon.

Assess which opportunities seem most promising and prioritize them.

### **TIME LINE GOALS**

If you are to ensure that your program will grow, you need to set time lines for various phases of development. Creating time lines always involves prediction, which is rarely accurate. So, set time lines in general terms and update and adjust them as the program develops. Remember that the work you are doing is neither easy nor impossible, so do not let time line readjustment either discourage or exhilarate you.

Set time lines for the following four phases:

1. *Start-up period.* This period involves finding central organizers, creating your plans, and then initiating them.
2. *Implementation phase.* During this phase, you go from planning to action. The most critical task during this phase is identifying a very small number of events (perhaps only one) and carrying them out. These may be recruitment and outreach events featuring your central organizers. Your priority is recruiting, so keep the events short and interesting
3. *Activities phase.* This phase involves the main work of your program—staging debates and related events. These events should also be punctuated with training opportunities for those interested. Schedule your events at regular intervals. If you leave a long gap between activities, people will forget your program. I have found that regular events (“Training every Thursday evening at 7 p.m. in Café Romulus”) work well because people can integrate your activities into their schedules.

4. *Assessment phase.* Assessment is extremely important for the success and growth of your program. It is not a separate phase; instead, you should do it after each activity to determine what is working well and what is not.

Assessment may be necessary for a variety of reasons. You may be having difficulties in outreach and recruitment, retention of participants, staging of events, publication of events, follow-up with participants, or any number of related issues. Problems need to be recognized and dealt with as soon as they arise.

Some assessments may involve a slight tinkering with events and procedures, while others may involve a major redirection of resources and activities. If your people are not interested in a certain kind of activity, then perhaps you should drop it and substitute another or maybe the publicity for that activity needs to be rethought. If, on the other hand, your difficulties are in implementing a core activity, such as trainings, you may need to adjust procedures or personnel.

To be effective, assessment requires the involvement of all group members, not just some of the central organizers. Problems need to be seen as shortcomings of the group, not just a few people. Talk openly about problems and try to address them positively. If they are not amenable to solution, then devote time and resources to other facets of the program. Do what works.

5. *Expansion phase.* We have already discussed ways you might expand. But before you do so, determine whether expansion is appropriate. Ask your team:
  - Are our existing activities healthy and mature enough to warrant expansion? If you already have problems, expansion may only exacerbate them.

- Do we have the resources to expand? If you don't have enough people to hold existing events, adding new activities will only make the problem worse. If funds are short, then implementing new ideas may be unrealistic. Ask how expansion will be staffed and supported before undertaking it.
- Will expansion further our mission? Remember that the mission of creating a debate society is to serve people. If you will be reaching more people or create new partnerships that can improve your program, then your plans further your goal. Expansion that does not increase the number of people served is a false goal.

## Conclusion

Planning must be based on good information and involves significant forethought. It needs to be an ongoing process, not a one-time activity. Planning can help avoid problems, create opportunities, and improve your chances of success. As you work, remember that although planning is most important at the beginning of your program, it should never end.

## References

Snider, Alfred. *Voices in the Sky: Radio Debating*. New York: IDEBATE Press, 2005. <http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Voices%20in%20the%20sky.pdf>

———, and Maxwell Schnurer. *Many Sides: Debate Across the Curriculum*, rev. ed. New York: IDEBATE Press, 2006. [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Many\\_Sides\\_2nd\\_ed.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Many_Sides_2nd_ed.pdf)

### **Additional Materials**

Education Scotland. "Debating in Schools." <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/debatinginschools/index.asp>

International Debate Education Association. "Developing a Debate Club." <http://idebate.org/training/resources/546>

———. "Start a Debate Club." <http://idebate.org/about/debate/startclub>

Middle School Public Debate Program. "Building a Team." <http://www.middleschooldebate.com/resources/teambuilding.htm>

Moe, Brenda. "Building a Successful Speech and Debate Team: A Guide for the Novice Coach." Ripon, WI: National Forensic League, 2007. [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Moe\\_NFL\\_buildingssuccessfulteam.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Moe_NFL_buildingssuccessfulteam.pdf)





## CHAPTER 3

# Dealing with Central Organizers

The central organizers are the heart of your efforts. This chapter deals specifically with that group: how to organize it and what you and they should keep in mind while working together. How you approach these tasks will depend on your setting. Teachers and professors trying to form school or university debate teams will be in a different position from citizens trying to form community debate groups. Yet, the general concepts below will still apply. Ultimately, all are still human beings trying to work together to achieve a common goal.

My suggestions are based on a long history of creating debate-related events; remember, though, your situation might be such that what I am suggesting may not work. Feel free to be a critical consumer of my ideas—after all, debate is about thinking critically!

## **Recruitment and Orientation**

Finding central organizers can be challenging. You have to locate individuals you can work with and who have the qualities you need. They may have different talents and

backgrounds, but all must be able to work together to make your project a success.

## **CRITERIA FOR ORGANIZERS**

There are a number of qualities that a central organizer *must* have and some that are valuable but not essential.

### **Essential**

- *Motivation.* Starting a program is almost always a “labor of love” and not of profit, and, in any case, it involves a lot of hard work. People need to be motivated to put in the needed effort.
- *Time.* Building a program takes time; those who are already overburdened may not be able to offer that. This does not mean that they cannot be useful in other roles, but a central organizer needs to be able to devote a lot of time to the program.
- *Commitment.* Central organizers should be committed to the broader goals I outlined in Chapter 1. You need this commitment both to build good communication and to overcome the challenges your program will face. Just as the civil rights movement in the United States urged participants to keep their “eyes on the prize,” central organizers should remain committed to the ultimate goals and not be distracted by difficulties. Look for people who are optimistic and who can see beyond trials and tribulations.

### **Valuable but not essential**

- *Special talents.* Central organizers can be valuable because they have useful skills, for example, writing, website building, event organizing, or graphic design.

- *Contacts and networks.* People who know other people can be very useful in generating publicity and support for your group, in negotiating with suppliers, or in coordinating with other groups.

A proper mix of people will help you succeed. While all central organizers should have motivation, time, and commitment, some should also have special skills and contacts. This will enable your group to turn to one of your central organizers for whatever is essential—publicity, outreach efforts, problem solving, and event hosting.

### **FINDING CENTRAL ORGANIZERS**

As you move through your daily life, keep an eye open for individuals you think would be a good addition to your program. They could be friends, family, work associates, fellow students, or even contacts you find during your information-gathering activities. You can recruit through social media or tack notices on bulletin boards in schools, neighborhoods, or gathering spaces. Or you could place open calls for organizers and then invite them to a meeting where you describe your plans and ask them to become involved at this level.

Not everyone will become a central organizer, but some will, and others will remain as supporters and participants. As you recruit core organizers, ask them look out for additional members for this group. Be simple and open and invite people to contact you.

### **APPROACHING POTENTIAL ORGANIZERS**

If someone seems interested in joining your team, set up a personal meeting to discuss your ideas. When you speak with them, don't appear to have all your plans thought out because people will feel a lack of ownership in the project. Even if

you have strong opinions, be open to new ideas—when someone suggests an idea that you have already considered, welcome it. Don't point out that you had already thought of it. Accept those who are very different from you; a wider variety of individuals tends to make for a stronger, not a weaker, organization.

### **ORIENTATION**

Once you have recruited several potential central organizers, meet with the group to orient the members and begin discussing some of the planning items covered in Chapter 2. This meeting is not to make firm decisions but to share ideas and perhaps create a common foundation for future action. Make sure to set dates for future meetings. During these preliminary sessions, the individuals who are really interested in becoming central organizers and who meet your criteria will become evident.

You need not recruit all your central organizers at once, but you shouldn't make substantive plans until you have at least three-to-five people in the group. It might take time to find them—during that time you can be gathering information and networking with other potential organizers.

## **The Structure of the Core**

As time goes by, your group may need a formal structure, but initially avoid a counterproductive rigid and hierarchical organization. You may give titles (chairperson, president, etc.) to individuals for publicity purposes and for contact with the public, but don't take titles too seriously. Remind central organizers that all are equal. I've seen groups die when they let ego and status get in the way of what they all want—a successful debate group. Central organizers should not try to

assert authority. The authority that counts is the authority of a good idea—when the group accepts and implements one, everyone wins. Take good ideas from whoever offers them, abandon bad ideas even if they're yours.

## **Communicating with Your Core**

Good communication between central organizers is vital to the success of your organization. Your communication patterns, the atmosphere you create, and the communication channels you establish will go far in ensuring that your core organizers can carry on their work efficiently and effectively.

### **COMMUNICATION PATTERNS**

Good communication patterns include:

- an open and honest sharing of ideas;
- willingness to offer and accept criticism and not to mistake it for personal criticism;
- giving credit and praise widely to those who may deserve them—even a little bit;
- willingness to take blame along with refusal to blame those who tried but did not succeed;
- “eyes on the prize” rhetoric.

### **CREATING A COLLEGIAL ATMOSPHERE**

Creating a collegial atmosphere at meetings can promote a sense of unity and enthusiasm among your core organizers. Make new members feel welcome. Encourage everyone to speak. Move around the table asking people for their views so no one feels left out. Try to come to a decision by

consensus. This can be difficult, but it is possible in small groups. If individuals seriously disagree, keep communicating until a consensus is reached, even if it means continuing the discussion in a future meeting. Decisions by consensus are much more likely to be supported and well-implemented by all members of your group, whereas if some people are “outvoted,” they have a vested interest in having an idea fail.

You want to make sure to show appreciation and gratitude for what people do, even if things don’t go so well. Tell people you appreciate their efforts and don’t blame them for less-than-satisfactory outcomes. Focus on fixing things, not on blame. Communication should be open and direct; avoid talking about others behind their backs. I’ve found that if I find myself saying something critical about someone, I stop and say that I need to share this with him or her personally; then actually do. A pattern like this allows you to mention criticism of others by adding that you have discussed the issue with them. This tactic helps create a climate of open communication. If you want such a climate, all of you need to model that behavior for one another.

### **CREATING OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS**

If your central organizers are to be effective, you need to create “official” communication channels so they can easily communicate with each other between meetings. These channels might include:

- an email contact group;
- a telephone contact tree. This would allow one person to contact a few, who would then contact others;
- a Twitter feed (<http://twitter.com>) where central organizers can share short thoughts and bits of news. This can be very useful for important communications such as “We

have the space for the April event,” “Please bring the documents to the next meeting,” or “I will be late because of a personal emergency.”

## **Allocating and Managing Tasks**

You have a number of important tasks to accomplish, but no central organizer can, or should, do all of them. You simply don't have the time to do everything yourself and, as we've seen, dividing duties and responsibilities promotes a sense of ownership among the group. This sense of ownership must be shared with all of the central organizers. This is true regardless of what type of society you are starting. If you are establishing a student club, then the faculty member should empower students to do as much as possible to spread ownership and reduce faculty fatigue. If you are creating a membership organization, the tasks should be spread out among members to increase a sense of involvement as well as make sure that things get done.

### **ASSESSING AND DIVIDING TASKS**

One of the basic principles of debating is that no one person always knows best. Not every task you suggest is a good idea. Make sure your core group supports it before you begin. To determine if a task is worthwhile, ask for volunteers. If no one does, suggest that perhaps this is an indication that the group doesn't think it's a good idea. Your comment will either produce a volunteer or else the realization that a small group can't and shouldn't do everything.

When you are dividing tasks, consider two criteria:

1. *Ability.* Members who have special interests and talents should be allowed to pursue those. Artists can design

posters and logos, writers can produce proposals and press releases, Internet-savvy individuals can design webpages, highly social people can engage in outreach, highly organized people can plan events, those with media experience can do media outreach, highly committed and persuasive individuals can raise funds and build support, etc. Encourage people to do what they want to do and what they think they are good at.

2. *Essential qualities.* Some tasks are bigger than others and will require more work. These, as well as the tasks that are most important, should go to those who have those crucial qualities we spoke of earlier—motivation, time, and commitment. Someone who is not seriously committed and is short of time should not plan a major tournament. Don't be afraid to give easier but important tasks to those who seem less qualified; they may grow into larger responsibilities.

One way to determine how to allocate tasks is to have a frank discussion about what a task entails so people know what will be involved. For example, organizing a public debate will include determining an issue, finding participants, locating a venue, scheduling an appropriate time, managing publicity and recruitment of an audience, setting up the facility, moderating the event, cleaning up afterward, and coordinating post-event publicity and documentation. When the task is analyzed, what sounded like an easy assignment for one person may be more appropriate for two or three.

Occasionally you'll find that one of your most committed core organizers has taken on too many tasks. Suggest that the eager volunteer not accept any additional assignments and focus on existing obligations. Encourage others to assist or assist yourself. You don't want the individual to fail and become discouraged.



## **MONITORING PROGRESS**

Some tasks involve a number of actions over time. To ensure that they are completed in a timely manner, monitor task progress. You can do this in several ways:

- *Review the progress of major tasks at your regular meetings.* Make this review a routine part of the agenda.
- *Ask people to circulate email updates on their progress.* Remember that silence may be an indication of procrastination or problems, so investigate if someone misses a date for reporting.
- *Appoint one member of your central group to monitor the progress of projects for the larger group.* This person can sound an alarm when tasks are not being done—but should more often congratulate those who are making good progress.

Remember that often you will be working with students and young people who have little experience in developing a project and with adults who are trying to fit your project into their busy schedules. People can become distracted by other elements in their lives or may take on more than they can handle, so progress reviews are very important. Plan events well in advance and chart their progress through time. I have been to and have heard of many events where much was left to the last minute. The events more or less failed, leaving participants disappointed and organizers embarrassed. Forethought can be key to avoiding problems. Remember:

- *Set deadlines.* Activities are easier to organize and accomplish if they have deadlines. Divide a complex project into early, middle, and late stages. If you do that and then set dates at which each set of tasks should be completed, you can avoid that late surprise when too much still needs to be done.

- *Start early, finish early.* A task that is completed early is better than a task that is completed at the last minute. A task that is begun early is more likely to be completed on time. These may seem like two basic concepts, but the world of debate organizing often ignores them. It may well be because many of the organizers are students who may be planning an event for the first time. It may also be because many students wait to do their academic work until the last minute. Central organizers should try to infuse these two essential concepts into the work habits of the group.
- *Trying is not accomplishing.* While “I called them about the rooms but got no answer” may satisfy the person who called, it does not produce the rooms. Be persistent.
- *Beware of silence.* Many people try to avoid sharing bad news, as if silence will make a problem go away. If someone working on a task stops communicating, the project may not be going well. Contact that person and offer help. A note saying, “How is the website going? Can I help?” is not threatening but may reveal that, in fact, no progress has been made.

To avoid this problem congratulate members for bringing their problems out into the open instead of hiding them.

- *Expect unforeseen delays and challenges.* Stuff happens. You will always meet unforeseen problems. Encourage your central organizers to speak early and often about problems—even potential problems—and ask for advice and assistance as soon as possible.
- *Have a back-up plan.* Having a back-up plan for dealing with unforeseen delays and challenges can minimize their negative impact.

## **EVALUATING PROJECTS**

Evaluate a project as soon as it is finished to determine how worthwhile it was and whether it should be repeated. Your criteria for evaluating will depend on the project, but here are some general methods you can use:

- discuss the event with your central organizers;
- ask participants for an evaluation;
- poll the membership to see if they thought it worthwhile;
- determine whether it created interest in future events or activities.

This evaluation can help determine how you should handle similar efforts in the future.

## **Official Organizational Design**

How you officially organize your group will be determined by your setting and by the vision of your core organizers. Here are some options:

- *School or university club.* Your club might need to be authorized by a specific school and be under the authority of a sponsoring teacher. Many such groups require a specific organizational form or constitution.
- *University program.* A college debate program might need to be organized under the auspices of a specific department or academic program. Often (as in the United States) direct control is vested in a specific faculty member or a paid coach. Many universities have both an academic debate program that receives funding from the institution or department as well as a student-sponsored club that is funded by a student activities group.

- *Club or voluntary association.* The formal structure will depend on the laws of the jurisdiction in which it is formed.
- *Nonprofit or nongovernmental organization.* Your society will have to comply with the legal requirements of the jurisdiction in which it is formed. These often require a specific structure, such as having a chief officer and a board of directors. The group may be organized as a “charitable” or “service” organization, again depending on the jurisdiction.
- *Business.* Some groups may be organized as a business operated by an individual or as a limited liability corporation. Seek legal advice before you choose this path.

You can also organize your group informally, but this will not work over an extended period and not if you plan on arranging events of even modest sophistication.

## **Conclusion**

The information in this chapter is essential because how those most involved in your group will interact is extremely important and needs to be considered in advance. I would repeat, however, that my suggestions are merely advisory and should be adjusted as you see fit. I would remind you that those most involved in organizing a debate society need to be kind toward and respectful of one another. If you want power, if you want money, then go where power and money are, and that is not in organizing debate-related activities. If you want to promote civil discourse, you should always try to model it.

**Additional Materials**

National Council of Nonprofits. "Why Capacity Building Is Needed." <http://www.councilofnonprofits.org/capacity-building/what-capacity-building/why-capacity-building-needed>



## CHAPTER 4

# Organizing and Recruiting

This chapter focuses on ways in which your organization can locate, interest, and involve new people. It is not designed to be an exhaustive discussion of how to recruit, but it should provide you with a number of ways I have found to be successful in accomplishing this goal.

## Determining How to Recruit

After you and your core organizers have determined the basic outlines of your program, your next task is to decide how you will locate and recruit new members. Having a special meeting devoted to this particularly important task can be very helpful.

### **BRAINSTORMING**

One of the best ways to determine how to proceed is to engage in what is known as “brainstorming.” Brainstorming involves four distinct phases:

- *Phase One:* Your group spontaneously suggests ideas while one member keeps a list of the suggestions. The focus is

on quantity rather than quality. Welcome all ideas; don't criticize. A negative reaction may inhibit other people from making other suggestions. And, bad ideas sometimes spark good ideas.

Don't end this phase too soon; often the good and more creative ideas begin to appear only after a period of silence. People hate silence. Thus, they will try extra hard to think of more ideas to break the silence. But, once the well of creativity seems to have run dry, quickly move on to the next phase.

- *Phase 2:* Discard duplicative ideas.
- *Phase 3:* Sort through the list to see which ideas you want to consider further.
- *Phase 4:* Evaluate the ideas and chose those you want to pursue.

## **Recruitment Phases**

Recruiting is done in two phases. In the first, you attempt to get people interested in your activity; in the second, you make sure that those who are interested get involved in ways that work for them

### **PHASE ONE: GETTING PEOPLE'S INTEREST**

Phase One involves developing the themes of your recruiting materials and determining the channels you will use to solicit prospective members.

#### **Determining Recruiting Themes**

Before you brainstorm how to recruit members, brainstorm the best way to introduce your program. Ask yourselves what

elements of your program would appeal most to potential participants? What characteristics would you emphasize? Is your program:

- *Issue-oriented.* Your debate activities should be relevant to the issues that concern your community and potential participants. Letting people know that these issues are important to your group might encourage them to join.
- *Self-improvement-oriented.* Many students are concerned about preparing themselves for success in their future careers. Stress that debating will teach them skills useful in a wide variety of areas: business and professional life, academia, interpersonal relations, as well as community involvement.
- *Intellectually oriented.* Many young people, especially students, are interested in joining a group that is not just social but deals with issues. While debating activities can be and should be fun, they also have a decided intellectual dimension that can be very appealing to many more-serious young people.

Of course, older people have the same motivations. Much of modern mass media and pop culture can have a decidedly anti-intellectual cast; not all citizens are satisfied with such an approach. Throughout human history, our culture has thrived on vigorous discussion of interesting and often complex ideas. Take advantage of people's desire to explore ideas.

- *Competition-oriented.* The fact that debating is intellectual competition may make it especially appealing for some. Don't be afraid to advertise this element if debate tournaments and other forms of competition will be part of your program. Just remember that too great an emphasis on competition may alienate some people—in your



recruiting, balance the competitive element of your program with other benefits.

- *International contact-oriented.* If your program will involve contact with people from other countries, make this clear to potential members. The international aspect might encourage some to join. International contact doesn't have to involve travel; you can invite people from other countries to your events as well. This automatically makes it an "international" event.

Once you have determined the major themes of your program, use them extensively in your recruiting. Remember, though, that while you will use these general themes in your literature, ultimately your approach should be tailored to the individual you hope to recruit.

### **Determining Recruiting Methods**

Having determined the appeals you want to use, you need to find ways to reach potential members. The content of the communication is only as good as the channels that convey it. Your methods should match your group's specific purposes and goals, but here are some basic ideas:

- *Make personal contacts.* Personal communication is one of the most effective ways to make meaningful contact with people, particularly if you already have an established relationship.

Ask all central organizers to contact everyone they think might be interested in your program and encourage them to both attend an event and become part of your exciting and vibrant effort. Give prospective members recruiting materials to share with others. I describe this approach as the "each one, reach one" strategy. Actually, it is more like "each one, reach many," but the previous

version rhymes nicely. When someone brings others into the group, make sure to acknowledge and congratulate the recruiter.

- *Recruit as many people as you can.* Larger groups attract more people than smaller ones. If they see a lot of people joining, people wonder what the appeal of the group is. The “bandwagon effect” or the “appeal of the crowd” may be an argumentative fallacy, but it is a powerful social reality. Regardless of whether someone is in your social circle or not, invite him to join. Contact and welcome everyone. There is no room for shyness in outreach. The more people who are involved, the more exciting the events will be, the more dramatic the effects on the surrounding society and community will be, and also, quite frankly, the more fun it will be.
- *Contact possible members repeatedly.* Often, repeated attempts at recruitment pay off. People may be shy and afraid to commit, but when you invite them more than once, you show that you’re interested in them and that you believe your activity is worthwhile. Many of those I have recruited have thanked me later for inviting them multiple times, saying they wish they had accepted my invitation the first time.
- *Go where the people are.* You can also set up a table at an athletic or entertainment event where you can distribute flyers and answer questions about your program.
- *Reach out to other groups.* Use online listings to determine what clubs, schools, voluntary associations, neighborhood councils, political parties, and professional groups are in your area and approach all of them at least once a year. Don’t rely only on written outreach; attend a group meeting. Ask if you could have a spot on the agenda and

promise to take no more than 2–4 minutes of their time. Those interested can talk to you individually after the meeting. People tend to join groups with other people like them. Tailor appeals to the members of that group based on the similarities between your group and theirs.

Obviously, if schools are a focus for you, you should visit them. Before you visit with a principal or headmaster, however, speak informally to a teacher or some students so that you have a bit of background about the school and know your audience. During your visit, emphasize the value of debate for education. Obviously, you are in favor of debate, but you need to communicate to the administrator why it would be to her advantage to become involved in your effort.

- *Religious groups can also be very fruitful places to recruit members.* These groups are interested not just in getting their message across, but also in positive youth activities and improving the status of civil society. Just as you do before you visit a school, make sure you know about the institution and how debate could benefit its members.
- *Teach to reach.* Use your skills to attract people to your program. Organizations may want their members to improve their public speaking skills. If you offer basic workshops, people may become interested in your activities. Every workshop or training session that you hold is an opportunity to reach additional people.
- *Utilize a variety of media.* People cannot join your group unless they know about it, so remember that every bit of publicity is also a recruitment tool. Send your message to local newspapers, newsletters, and radio stations—and keep sending it. They may not respond or use your information the first time because they receive many such

requests, but if you are persistent, they will begin to take you seriously. Knowing someone at one of these outlets will increase your chances of getting their attention.

Personally delivering information is more effective than just sending it electronically. Follow up on telephone calls. If you are targeting a low- circulation community newsletter, write something for it and make it relevant to them.

Start a Facebook group and invite all of your friends to join. Post pictures and updates of events. Have all other central organizers do that as well. Appoint someone from your group to manage the site and keep it updated.

Create a Twitter address (<http://twitter.com>) and feed for your organization. Invite people to follow it. Put your Twitter address (@we debate or something like that) in all of your messages. Often people who are curious about something will follow Twitter messages to see if they would be interested. I have found that people start following me on Twitter and later ask me how they can get involved. Post news about meetings, events, new initiatives, special congratulations, and achievements as well as links to more substantive material on your website. If each “tweet” has content, people will not mind, but without good content they tend to become irritated. Put someone in charge of your official Twitter feed.

- *Create a website.* A good website is a wonderful recruiting tool. It needs to be eye-catching, simple to use, and full of information. It should include background information and your mission statement as well as reports on previous and upcoming events. Use photos of people having fun to enliven your site. Your photos should span the demographic spectrum by showing young, adult, and older people involved and smiling. Show people speaking and expressing themselves. Embed video and audio

as well. It is not expensive or technologically complex to make a simple video using a mobile phone or laptop (not to mention a very inexpensive video camera) and then edit it using free software and upload it to a free video service such as <http://vimeo.com>. Easy-to-use video editing software is available for free. See <http://www.desktop-video-guide.com/top-5-free-video-editing-software-review.html> for details.

Assign a club member to keep your site updated. Updating is important because people will stop checking if they see nothing new. When you have a significant update, alert people by sending that link through your Twitter feed.

If you don't want to establish your own website, try to become part of an existing one, such as that of a school or community group. Doing so will make establishing and servicing your website easier.

Websites may change over time, but some examples you might want to investigate as models include:

#### University debate program websites

- Universidad Andrés Bello: <http://sdd.unab.cl/> (Spanish)
- University of Vermont: <http://debate.uvm.edu/debateblog/LDU/Team.html> (English)

#### High school debate programs

- Bronx High School of Science: [http://bxscience.edu/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC\\_ID=105230&type=d](http://bxscience.edu/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=105230&type=d)
- Woodward Academy: <https://sites.google.com/a/woodward.edu/debate/home>

Nonprofit groups organizing debate activities in Slovenian and English

- Za in Proti (Slovenia): <http://www.zainproti.com/web/>
- ARGO Debate (Romania): <http://open.argodebate.ro/>  
A parent group organizing a debate program
- National Christian Forensic Association: <http://www.ncfca.org/>
- Homeschooling Parents <http://www.hsllda.org/docs/hshb/54/hshbwk5.asp>

A community group organizing a debate league

- New York City Urban Debate League: <http://www.nycdebate.org/>

A service club sponsoring a speech contest

- Rotary Club: <http://www.rotary7610.org/speechcontest.htm>
- *Utilize all types of communication.* If it involves communication, use it to your advantage. Communication takes place constantly and everywhere. Where communication is, your message can be. I have seen bumper stickers, road signs, writing pads, computer USB drives, water bottles, shirts, pens, and many other ways of sending messages about debating activities.

Once you've finished determining your themes and recruiting tactics, document your ideas so you don't have to reinvent the wheel each time you want to recruit. Evaluate these various tactics and use the successful ones again while adjusting those that were not successful.

## **Implementing Recruiting Efforts**

For recruiting efforts to succeed, you need to implement them with care. You can't just develop a great recruiting plan; you must implement it skillfully over time, adjust and update it as necessary—and don't give up! Recruitment never ends. As you implement your plan, remember to:

1. *Stay on message.* Stay focused on your chosen messages. Political campaigns know that if they are distracted from their main message, it may well be lost amidst the background noise of our communication environment. In running for president in 1992, Bill Clinton tried to remind himself of his basic message every morning. His famous words, "It's the economy, stupid," and "Keep it simple, stupid," have become legendary among political operatives. Debate promoters can benefit from the same kind of focus.

When you find a message that works, use it over and over again. When your message is not successful, adjust it. This advice may seem to be simply commonsense, but it's important to highlight it. Adjust your message as time goes by and you will have more recruitment success.

2. *Utilize time lines.* Recruiting takes a lot of effort, so set aside a time during which you will focus your energies on implementing your recruiting plan. Chart how successful you are and, as you near the end of the period, decide whether to extend it to meet your recruitment goals.
3. *Cover all available communication options.* You must use all communication channels available to you for two reasons. First, some individuals are more responsive to one type of communication than another; second, some people are more likely to respond if they receive your message in more than one form. For example, students may be more likely to notice a tweet than an advertisement in the

student paper. And, seeing a table set up after they read about your program in a local publication may prompt them to find out more. You may not want to use some channels, but have a good reason for not doing so.

4. *Track and follow up with respondents.* Create a contact list of those who have responded to your publicity. You can do this using a simple spreadsheet or an online resource such as Google Drive (<https://drive.google.com/start?authuser=0#home>), which will enable you to share the list among your core organizers. Then maintain communication and keep people involved. Promptly answer any questions. If they come to an event or comment on your social network group site, send them a message encouraging them to participate. If they don't respond to your messages, let them know that they are still wanted and their participation would be appreciated. Remember, people can be a bit shy about debate-related activities, so let them know that you want them.
5. *Arrange personal meetings.* While individual meetings take a lot of time, they are the best way to recruit. You can tailor your message to the individual and immediately respond to any questions. I usually bring some brief printed information about next steps or where he or she can get information so the person has something to take away. Taking the time to meet one-on-one shows that you think the individual is important and needed. When you show this, good things happen. (These personal meetings are also a great chance to make sure you have correct contact information.)
6. *Hold information sessions.* Your initial contact may have been impersonal—through an ad or website—so holding a meeting enables you to make things more human.



Information meetings can be very effective ways of recruiting.

Design your session with the following in mind:

- Keep it short—30 minutes or less, with time to talk after the formal session.
- Feature more than one person delivering your message and, if possible, use people similar to those attending.
- After a brief description of your program, ask two or three members of your group to talk briefly about why they are involved. Have each stress a different aspect of the program.
- Answer questions—let the other speakers do so when possible.
- If the group is small, ask the attendees to introduce themselves. Look at them as they speak, nod and smile, which indicates that they are being heard and welcomed.
- Get their contact information.
- Offer the attendees the same printed material you might give out at a personal meeting.
- Tell them they are now part of the group and that you look forward to working with them.
- Stay around after the formal close to chat with anyone who is interested. People can be shy in front of a group and may want to ask questions and speak with you privately.
- Don't serve food. I know this may seem counterintuitive, but food and refreshments often are distracting.

## **PHASE TWO: GETTING PEOPLE INVOLVED**

Just because people are interested doesn't mean that they will become active participants. An essential part of recruiting is making sure that those who are interested get involved in ways that work for them. To do so, you need to follow up on your contacts and stage demonstration events.

### **Follow-up**

- *Circulate additional materials.* When people want to know more, you need to give them more information. Now that you have their contact information, send them basic activity descriptions as well as introductory training materials. You can either use materials you create or free materials from the Internet. You can find basic instructional text materials for download at <http://debate.uvm.edu/dcdebatelibrary.html> and at <http://debate.uvm.edu/quicklinks.html>.

The following website has links to a wide variety of videos on various debate formats: <http://debate.uvm.edu/learndebate.html>.

For those who want to listen to smaller audio files on their portable music players or mobile phone, go to <http://debate.uvm.edu/low.html>.

- *Solicit feedback.* Determine what kind of information people want and learn their interests. Even if you choose not to send them the specific information they request, you've gained background information you can use for your recruiting efforts.
- *Involve new recruits in recruiting.* New recruits can be useful for recruiting additional people. Often, new members do not feel ready to formally recruit others, but if you encourage them and provide them with a small amount

of training, they will bring their friends and associates. Personal contacts are a great way for new people to find more new people. If and when this happens, praise the individual who made the contact and comment about how valuable she is to the group.

- *Update your roster regularly.* Make sure to add new recruits to your roster and review it to see if people are still active. To update, you need to keep a record of attendance at events. This record is very useful in maintaining contact with potential members because it will indicate if people stop coming. Should you see a drop off in attendance, you need to investigate why. Additional encouragement is almost always a good strategy—a message like “we missed you” can be very helpful in bringing them back.
- *Create contact points.* Create phone banks, social media groups, and Twitter lists so that all members can keep in contact. Contact point lists are very much like rosters, but far more public. These can contain email addresses, telephone numbers, and Twitter user names. Many people are unwilling to disclose their place of residence, so include this only if you have a good reason to do so (such as using their home as a meeting point).
- *Use email judiciously.* While you should create and maintain an email list, use it wisely. If you overuse it, people will begin to see your messages as “spam.” If there is too much “chatter” among members, privately ask them to take personal conversations “off list” and have them just between themselves.

One way to establish an email list is to use the original “listserv” program, available for free at: <http://www.losed.com/download/listservfree.asp>. Another dependable

service is Yahoo Groups, available for free at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/>.

### **Demonstration Events**

When people show their interest and want more information, schedule an event. I usually invite prospective members to watch a practice debate and perhaps even get involved by debating themselves, but you have to determine what will work best for your program. Regardless of the event you stage, the logic behind it is always the same: people need to see what you do and what you might want them to do.

### **Designing Demonstration Events**

Demonstration events should be high quality but should not make debating appear so daunting that prospective members don't want to try it. Don't stage an extremely competitive event with a high level of stress. Make your demonstration entertaining without seeming difficult. Keep the mood affable and light. Your event should demonstrate that debaters can learn and have fun at the same time. Avoid panel discussions or lectures on how to debate. These events can be a bit boring and don't excite the audience to think, "Hey, I can do that." Your event should involve a number of individuals with different levels of experience. When possible, stage the event so the audience can ask questions or make very short (less than 1 minute) comments about it. The event should not be more than one hour and should include an informal period after the conclusion during which people can linger and ask questions. Hold events at convenient times and explain to attendees what went on and why. Literally "demonstrate" how a debate-related event works.

Types of demonstration events might include:

- sample public speaking training;

- sample “speak out” in which the public voices its opinion on an important issue;
- sample practice debate with audience involvement.

### **Staging Demonstration Events**

You can stage your demonstration wherever you think you might have an interested audience—a school, club, or church group. Some groups in the United States have also had luck staging events where people will be anyway—at a fair or a shopping mall. People walking by will stop, watch, listen, ask questions, and perhaps take a simple information sheet away with them. Wherever you hold your event, remember to get permission from the proper authority and choose a topic that will interest your audience.

You might be able to schedule an event on public access television or a radio station. Often radio stations are eager for content, and a short demonstration debate is free programming for the station and free publicity for you. This option might be especially useful if there is a “talk radio” station in your area that wants to attract listener call-in comments.

### **Scheduling Demonstration Events**

Schedule a series of demonstration events at regular intervals (every week, every two weeks, every month). Remember, such activities are both recruiting and training events, especially if you get new people involved. You might ask those who were interested after watching one demonstration to participate in the next one.

### **Publicizing Demonstration Events**

Invite those who have expressed interest to your event, but also publicize it to the general public because the event may help recruit new members as well. Remember to have general

information about your group and your plans available for attendees to take away.

### **Publicity After Demonstration Events**

Every event, including demonstrations, is a publicity story. After your event, utilize your internal publicity (your Twitter, website, etc.) as well as the other information outlets you may be working with to inform and promote. Your description of the event should be light and give the basics (what the event was, who was there, where it was). It should also explain why the event was exciting, perhaps with an interesting anecdote and always with a note about future events. Photos of the event always help.

Use inexpensive portable video cameras to document your event. Edit the event down and offer it on your website. Another option is to take slices of video from several different events to make a short but exciting video that you can embed in your website. Action video of what you really do can be a strong recruiting tool.

## **Conclusion**

No step in the process of developing a program is more important than recruiting. Make sure you recruit carefully and effectively.

Many people I have worked with have said that debating has virtually “changed their life,” and many of them are grateful that I asked them to become involved. One university professor recounts how his teacher at an inner-city high school kept encouraging him to join the debate team; he remembers the moment he did join as a major turning point in his life. Recruiting is not just about increasing the size of

your club, it is about creating opportunities for debating activities to change lives for the better.

### **Additional Materials**

Snider, Alfred. "Recruiting and Retaining Debaters." 2010., Debate Central. <http://debatevideoblog.blogspot.com/2010/12/lecture-trainers-recruiting-and.html>

———. "Recruiting and Retaining Debaters." 2013. Debate Central. <https://vimeo.com/69796992>

Volpe, Sharon. "Recruiting." National Forensic League, 2013. [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Volpe\\_NFL\\_recruiting.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Volpe_NFL_recruiting.pdf)



## CHAPTER 5

# Gaining Publicity and Finding Support

After you have decided on a mission and have some central organizers, and while you are recruiting members and getting them involved in some debating activities, you need to begin the process of gaining publicity and finding support for your efforts.

I'll discuss these two tasks separately, although they clearly are interrelated. As publicity grows, gaining support becomes somewhat easier. Thus, these two processes should go on simultaneously and should never end during the life of the program.

### **Using the Generative Power of the Word**

When you begin your program, you probably won't have a lot of resources. What you do have is an idea. It is a powerful idea; in many parts of the world this idea has taken hold despite few resources. It has done so because inside every person and society is a yearning to speak out on important issues, to develop patterns of communication that flourish in



the presence of disagreement, and to build on that communication. Use that yearning to build your group.

As has happened in so many places around the world, your ideas will be heard. This will not happen the first time you share them, or the second, but ultimately they will be heard, understood, and responded to. When that process begins, support will grow. “There is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come,” is how Victor Hugo put it.

## Telling Your Story

Draft a set of materials that you can use to promote your organization. Although you will use these materials in various situations, think of them as the different sections of your website so you can develop your site as you develop your materials.

### CORE DOCUMENTS

Your core documents should include:

- *Your mission statement.* Make it precise and brief. Those interested should be able to read it in a minute or two. It should talk about goals and activities, not the details of implementation. It should be inspiring as well as practical, stressing key goals but indicating that it is progress toward them that is important.
- *A “how you can get involved” statement.* This should explain how people can participate in your program. When developing your statement, ask yourself whether people with varying interests and skills can find roles that might interest them. Be sure to specify the roles: speaker, trainer, judge, audience, publicist, artist, editor, researcher—any roles you think relevant to your group. This statement should

give meeting times and places as well as people to contact for more information.

- *A list of activities.* A group should “do” something, so you should show what your group will do. Make these descriptions brief so busy readers can skim them, but have a more detailed description of each activity available separately in case people want more information.
- *A list of frequently asked questions.* The list will provide short answers to the questions people ask most often and link to longer answers. Place the questions and answers in either a “most asked to least asked” order or else group them under main headings. You can update this section as your group develops.
- *A list of news stories about group.* These can be either links to the main story or else short descriptions with quotations from the original story. This section should quickly give the impression that your group is a “happening” one that active people would like to become involved in.

You can create other documents based on your specific situation and goals. Feel free to ask those who are not familiar with your project to review these documents and give you feedback.

Once you’ve developed your core documents, set up a central online archive so that members can access the material easily. One useful way to do this is to use Filezilla (<http://filezilla-project.org/>), a free FTP (file transfer protocol) service. You might want to make this a “read only” Internet environment or else protect it with a password.

## **CREATING PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS**

Promotional materials tell the story of your group in an informative and inviting way. These materials should encourage people to become involved. They must gain the attention of those who may not yet be motivated to find out about what you are doing. They need to have a “hook,” some element that attracts people and makes them want to find out more. Some suggestions:

- *Keep your materials accurate and honest.* Never exaggerate or lie about your program. If you are caught once, your reputation is damaged forever. If your program is successful, lies from the past can catch up with you. I do surveys of debate promotional materials from all over the world, and I’m shocked by the number of times people make clearly false claims about their programs. Often the number of people involved (debaters, participants, audiences) is inflated, at other times the achievements are overstated (it is amazing how many debate groups in the United States win the “national championship of debating” each year given that there are so many different debate formats), or the reputation of an organization is exaggerated (“Harvard fears us,” “the best,” and others). The careful addition of a qualifier (“many,” “often,” “usually”) can make an otherwise outlandish statement sound more credible. Maintaining your credibility is essential in dealing with various media outlets, members, and supporters.
- *Make the truth sound good.* In drafting promotional materials, you must be credible but positive, enthusiastic but not boastful. One way to make the truth sound good is to use personal statements from those who have been involved. When people relate their personal experience, they are

telling the truth from their perspective, and the attribution of these remarks to individuals gives their statements credibility in the minds of readers.

- *Adjust your message to your audience.* Different audiences and purposes require different materials. Fortunately, we live in an information environment of “cut and paste,” so you can utilize your core documents to create new materials for specific purposes.
- *Adjust your materials based on reactions and effectiveness.* If your messages are not getting through to your intended audience, change them. You should also review your documents annually to make sure your message reflects the changing nature of your group. I’ve seen many instances where a healthy and thriving group is still using descriptions of their program that were accurate in its infancy.

## **USING PUBLICITY OUTLETS**

I spoke of the ability to “cut and paste” earlier, but that does not mean that you send the same information to different communication channels. You need to understand what they are looking for and shape your messages to their needs. In short, give them what they want.

### **Newspapers**

Different newspapers have different audiences. Large national papers want stories of interest to a wide audience. Local newspapers are interested in how your activities affect the community they serve. Other newspapers might be more targeted, as in the case of local “advertiser” newspapers that include some community stories but usually serve as the vehicles for advertising. Find the contact information for such publications and send materials by mail and email; also call

them to find out how you can use them to tell your story. These publications are often looking for community content.

When you submit your stories, keep time frame in mind. Submit stories about upcoming events a month, then a week, then a few days in advance. Many times, the earlier submission merely serves to alert the person screening the stories. Submit stories about past events the next day if possible. You do not want to offer a story that is “old” news.

Newspapers are interested in basic elements of a story, so include the following in your submission:

- A “hook” to get the attention of readers. This might be the issue, the people, or the event itself.
- What is happening.
- Who is involved.
- When it takes place.
- Where it takes place.

If you email your story, send it to a specific reporter. Call the newspaper to find out who writes on your subject. It is often better to personally deliver a paper copy of the story *and* send an electronic copy.

Keep sending stories even if the paper rejects your first few attempts. Chances are that the paper will eventually use them because your persistence indicates that you are serious about what you are doing. Thank the publisher and/or editor if they give you publicity, and then invite them to become partners and supporters.

## **Radio**

Radio stations are often overlooked in publicity efforts, but in my experience radio can be excellent vehicle for giving your program public exposure. In many countries radio programs

are a popular source of information. People listen to radio while they work, drive, do things at home, and, increasingly, they listen to radio on portable devices.

How you target stations depends on who operates them. The best stations to target are private talk shows that allow listeners to call in. You might also try radio stations that are a mixture of music and talk but, obviously, don't bother approaching all-music stations. When approaching private stations, emphasize the number of people involved in your program and its reach, especially if it deals with an issue of specific community interest. For government-operated stations, your strategy will need to be a bit different. For those, you'll need to emphasize how your activities are grounded in the community or are civic events.

Always approach smaller radio stations first. They are usually eager for content. You may have problems gaining coverage on larger stations, but keep trying. Often, when smaller stations give you exposure, larger stations will follow. Larger government-owned stations can be the most challenging, but you can gain attention by emphasizing your event's connection to an important issue as well as how your program furthers citizen involvement in the democratic process.

Approach a station with a proposal to hold a very short live debate about a newsworthy issue, and then invite people to call in, ask questions, and express their opinions. Not all callers will be trained in good argument; just tell your participants to keep their composure and always be polite. You will make a good impression. Some debate programs have even negotiated long-term agreements with radio stations to hold on-air debates. Such stations are then in a position to become partners and supporters of your work.

## **Television**

Having television stations publicize your program is much more difficult. Usually, they want to cover only large events. However, smaller and local stations often like to report on the great things young people are doing, and you will certainly have a lot of that to show. If they are interested, supply them with written copies of your promotional materials and follow their guidance on how to conduct any filming or coverage. In my experience, if you just talk about your program on camera, you will be edited and you may not like the edit. What I have found to be effective is to speak in 15–20-second sound bites. I will often say, “Sound bite number one,” then insert my comment, after that offering one or two additional sound bites. This procedure benefits both of you: the station has less editing to do and your message gets across more effectively.

Every media landscape is different. Take advantage of any opportunities that exist. In Vermont, for example, we have public access television, where cable television companies are required by the state to provide studio and air time to community members and groups. If this opportunity exists, take advantage of it. The station will welcome a responsible group that has something to say and may offer you a regular program. My university society does this and has now offered more than 450 programs. We offer a regular 30-minute program that discusses some important issue in each episode (<http://flashpointtv.blogspot.com/>).

## **Bulletin Boards**

Most communities have places to post information—at transit stops, supermarkets and shops, youth centers, churches, or public buildings. Use them. Create a list of these locations and group them in terms proximity. Then assign volunteers to post materials in the areas where they are likely to go.

Remember that the bulletin boards often have posting rules. Respect them or your beloved posters will be taken down right away. Many of these spaces are often cleared every week or so. Familiarize yourself with these particulars.

### **Posters**

Posters should be eye-catching but not too extravagant. Remember to use the themes that you developed for your recruiting materials. One poster might stress “meet and work with awesome people” (social), another might stress the concepts of “win, succeed, triumph” (competition), another might stress the concept of “learning success skills in education, business and professions” (advancement), and so on.

An expensive poster looks great but may not be cost-effective in terms of how many people it will attract. Look for print shops to make donations in exchange for advertising their shop on the poster. Many groups develop a standard poster that has a blank space at the bottom to fill in the specifics of an event or a meeting. Obviously, for important and larger events, you will want to make an individual poster.

### **School News and Announcements**

If your group is associated with a school, use its communication channels to reach students who may become debaters and teachers who may become allies.

Each school has different resources, but make sure to utilize the following where available:

- *Website*: for information about your program and events
- *Bulletin boards*: for your posters
- *Student or school newspapers*: for announcements and stories about upcoming or past events



- *Parent-teacher network newsletters or email messages:* for stories about your program and schedules of upcoming events
- *Morning announcements:* to circulate the latest results from the debate team and alert students to upcoming events
- *Assemblies:* to stage an event

### **Twitter**

Establish an account for your group, then encourage people to follow that account by publicizing it. Those already using Twitter might try your account, and if they find it useful will stick with you as well as “retweeting” some of your posts so that people who follow them can see what you do. Many people share top feeds they are following once a week with those who follow them. This does not happen right away, but it can build and grow. My simple Twitter feed now has more than 1,600 followers.

Use your Twitter feed to announce events, remind people of meetings, and also distribute news, such as tournament results or other achievements. Remember not to fill it with irrelevant material. If you clog their Twitter feeds with extraneous information (what you had for breakfast, the weather, and so on), people will drop you. I know of one major debate group that begins each day by wishing everyone “good morning”—which is not the way to keep people engaged.

### **Flyers**

Flyers are simple announcements on a single sheet of paper or a card that you can hand out to passersby. You can use these as a recruiting tool or to advertise one of your events. Don’t go overboard in designing these; keep the information basic. When you distribute them, don’t force them on people; they will just drop them. And, if people drop them, pick

them up. Someone once joined my club because he saw how responsible we were in cleaning up dropped flyers. Besides, you can use them over again.

### **CREATING A COMMUNICATION NETWORK**

While communicating with the wide world is important, you need to create a network to communicate with past, current, and prospective members. To do this effectively, you will need to utilize several different formats. You should have:

- a website
- an email list
- a newsletter
- a Twitter feed
- a Facebook page
- any other outlets that you think might be useful

Fortunately, they can all work together to meet information needs and to provide links to the public. If you organize them properly, they can be easy to update and very effective at the same time.

As you develop your network, keep these points in mind:

- *Keep telling the story.* Send out material at least once a week—more often if possible. When your communication network is static, people will think your organization is not active. Little changes can make a big difference. Repeating the general themes of your story within the context of specific events (demonstrating achievement of your mission) helps reinforce your message. Keep repeating your themes and your image will improve.

- *Use one story in many channels to save time and effort.* Don't rely solely on your website; use multiple channels. For example, you can:
  - put a story on your weekly email to members of your listserv;
  - make it into a blog posting on your organization's blog;
  - make it a new addition under "Events" on your website;
  - add a link to your Facebook page;
  - send out a Twitter message with a link in it;
  - send the story to publicity outlets you are using
- *Utilize the learning resources section of your website to keep members engaged and improving.* Regularly add links to debate training resources on the web and to any resources you've developed. Make sure to annotate the links in some detail so that users know what information they will be getting. Every time you add something new to this section, announce it through your communication network.
- *Invite links.* Create links to other groups you are working with: associated programs, sponsors, media outlets, and others. People like you when link your people with them. Likewise, encourage those you know and work with to link any web pages they have to your main website. Don't ask for links to your Facebook page or your blog; you want first-time readers to go to where they can get the most information: your main website.
- *Reach out to new people.* Use your communication network to constantly reach out to new people. Remind your members that they should always be recruiting. Always direct potential recruits to your main website. Review your

“splash” page (the first one they visit) to make sure they can easily find resources relevant to newcomers. Imagine yourself as a new person visiting the website for the first time.

## Identifying Supporters

You need various types of support for your program. Approach supporters so that they feel that they are both doing good and getting something in return. Altruism can be a strong motivator, but people are even more motivated when they can also identify clear benefits of their support.

### TYPES OF SUPPORT

Too often organizers identify “support” with “money.” With that sort of mindset, you are likely to get very little support and almost no money. Financial support is important, but supporters can offer you many other things, including:

- *Conceptual support.* At a very basic level, you can ask people to support the concept of what you are doing—getting people involved in discussing issues relevant to the community, training young people how to become responsible advocates, and creating a healthy environment for civil society. Their conceptual support, involving nothing more than a “Yes, I think that is a good idea,” can be an important beginning. It is a first step you can build on later.
- *In-kind support.* In-kind support can be extremely valuable, enabling you to obtain goods and services you could not afford to buy. Restaurants and food stores can offer free meals and snacks for your events. Media outlets offer you free publicity. Schools or community groups may have venues that you can use. Think of what businesses can

offer and ask for that after you have gained their conceptual support.

- *Personnel support.* Any assistance you receive makes your work easier, so look for individuals and groups who can help you. Supporters might put up posters, handle communication duties, act as chaperones or hosts at your events, or serve as judges after brief training. If you are approaching a group, get permission from the leader to ask the members to volunteer their services.

## Sponsorships

A sponsor is a special type of supporter, one who backs a program or event substantively in return for the open thanks of the group. Any time that you do anything, you can offer a sponsorship. Sponsorship may represent either a financial contribution or the provision of something you need, such as facilities, food, personnel, or publicity.

### **ATTRACTING SPONSORS**

You can attract sponsors in two ways, either by offering them recognition or by attracting them to an issue.

#### **Offering Recognition**

You can recognize a sponsor for either general or specific support. Base your recognition on the level of support—more from the sponsor translates into more recognition from you. Obviously, supporting your entire program would require more of a commitment than supporting one event, like a training session or a public debate. Remember not to sell your group too cheaply but, at the same time, don't ask for

so much that you gain no sponsors. Start small and ask for more as time goes by. You can recognize sponsors by:

- Thanking them publicly at events.
- Including their name and logo on posters, banners, printed items, or on your website.
- Inviting them to receive personal recognition at an event they attend.
- Linking them on your website.
- Naming awards after them (e.g., the Livingston Award for Best Novice Debater).
- Naming an event after them.
- Allowing them to distribute their materials at your events.
- Mentioning them in any booklet or results packet associated with the event.
- Providing a small plaque or certificate thanking them and making a public presentation of that item.
- Accepting guidance from them in selecting the issue for debate and making their involvement public.
- Mentioning and thanking them in all publicity.

Use all legitimate avenues to recognize and thank sponsors. Encourage members and participants to thank sponsors as well as honor them with their business or patronage. If you have satisfied sponsors, get statements from them that you can use in recruiting other sponsors. Make their support of your activities seem like a direct benefit to them.

### **Attracted by an Issue**

Often people are motivated not by recognition but by concern about an issue. You can use an issue to attract sponsors in two ways. First, you can contact potential sponsors who might be interested in the issue and ask for their involvement. Alternately, if you want to attract a particular sponsor to your program, you may stage an event around an issue that interests her. Make sure, however, that the issue is also of interest to your members, participants, and audience. And remember, never compromise the nature of your activities to satisfy sponsors.

### **FINDING SPONSORS**

When they hear “sponsor,” many people think businesses, but look for sponsors in other groups as well.

- *Local governments.* While local governments may not initially be willing to contribute funds, they can help you gain access to facilities and provide needed publicity. Often you can gain their support by emphasizing how your activities help promote youth involvement in civic affairs. Many local governments are looking for ways to engage young people, and debate activities are a perfect way to do so.
- *NGOs.* Nongovernmental organizations are increasing in importance and presence all over the world. Often, NGOs reflect the needs of their community. Since you are also trying to be responsive to these, you have an ideal point of mutual interest that you should explore. Just like local governments, some NGOs want people to become more involved in civil society, which is one of your goals. Contact both domestic and international NGOs. Domestic NGOs can help connect you to people, events, and issues. International NGOs are more likely to contribute funds.

Frequently, international NGOs are looking for local partners, and your group can become one of these.

- *Youth groups.* Youth groups are ideal sponsors and partners for your group. You can offer them valuable resources, such as communication training. Youth groups can offer you access to facilities and potential members as well as possible funding. They are looking for exciting and productive activities for young people, and your group can certainly offer that. Locate youth groups in your community and meet with them about cooperation, sponsorship, or both. As with NGOs, your events and their events can contribute to each other.
- *Teachers and school administrators.* Obviously, if you want your program to be in schools, you will have to speak to school officials. You can offer schools a number of services, including communication training for teachers and students, involvement in issues you may be debating or discussing that are related to education, or community outreach projects they can be involved in.

While schools are unlikely to give you financial help, their support can be very useful. They can provide you with venues, access to potential members, and publicity within the school population.

- *Parents.* When you deal with young people, you also deal with their parents and guardians. Sometimes this can be difficult, but it can also be very rewarding. In my experience, very little is more positively moving to a parent than watching his child give a speech or participate in a debate. It is something almost all parents enjoy and want to see again. Parents are strongly motivated to help their child develop and appreciate that their child is involved in an activity that is productive and empowering. Take



advantage of this feeling. Make sure parents are connected to your communication network—reach out to them and invite them to become more involved.

Parents may be able to help you in a wide variety of ways. They can:

- Encourage their child to continue involvement in debate-related activities.
- Provide financial support to your group
- Act as a supervisor or chaperone on trips or in some activity.
- Become a spokesperson for your group among the adult community.
- Serve as a judge or moderator at debate events
- Lobby schools to become involved in debate-related activities.
- Help you network with other groups or individuals.
- Assist you in finding additional support.
- Take on specific tasks in your group, perhaps becoming a central organizer.
- *Local businesses.* Local businesses are always looking for good ways to advertise and often like to be linked to an event the public will view favorably. Make sure to stress the advantages of sponsorship as well as the low cost.

Even small businesses can offer substantial support, including:

- Placement of posters and other materials in their place of business

- In-kind donations of food, beverages, or products (often you can give them away as prizes or raffle them off) as well as help from their personnel
- Assistance at events you are hosting

Initially, a small local business is not likely to give money, but create a relationship of mutual benefit and the money may come later.

- *Local religious groups.* Quite often, local religious groups are very active in the community and are looking for ways to get their youth more involved. You don't have to be a member of the group, although respect for their beliefs is essential. You will have shared goals, which can form the basis for cooperation and possible sponsorship.

You can offer religious groups many services, including:

- Training their members and youth in public speaking.
- Staging a debate or discussion on an issue important to them.
- Providing their young people access to socially wholesome outreach activities that train them to be good citizens.
- Giving them recognition and publicity, much like I have suggested for other groups.

In exchange, they may be able to offer:

- Venues for you to hold events.
- Access to their members and the children of their members.
- Endorsements and official recognition that you can use in publicity efforts.

- Assistance in staging your events.

Initially, religious organizations are not likely to offer you a large sum of money, but once they become familiar with your program and its goals, they may do so. More important, their involvement may encourage their members to support you, financially or otherwise.

- *Local media.* Local media like to advertise themselves as being involved in positive community events, so they may be willing to support events and training, especially among young people. They can offer you publicity, as well as possible access to print facilities for fliers and posters. They might also link to you from their own website, thus increasing your outreach. This is an ideal partnership, where both have much to offer the other at very little direct cost.
- *Regional and national governments.* Once your organization is up and running, you can attempt to involve government groups as sponsors and supporters. This may involve youth or education agencies as well as those involved in areas such as law enforcement, waste disposal, land use, or development.

You could stage an impartial “candidate debate” and offer basic training and coaching to candidates in preparation for the event. Offer to negotiate the terms that all candidates will agree on. Then you can publicize the event—but most likely candidates will advertise the debate as well, thus expanding your outreach. Such an event can gain the attention of media and other groups that may, with time, become partners and supporters. You are giving these groups a way to become involved in politics while not supporting a specific candidate or party. Offer to make a video of the event and post it to your website; if you are using a service like Vimeo.com, you

can provide other groups with a simple code to embed the video on their own website.

## **APPROACHING SUPPORTERS**

Don't approach supporters as if you're just there to ask for something. Stress what you have to offer as well as the low cost to them. Start small and build to something bigger by making their involvement with your program worthwhile.

- *Approach based on what might benefit them.* Determine what supporters' potential interests are and why they should become involved before you approach them. You will not succeed in involving all you invite, but if you cast your net wide and are determined, you could make real progress. Keep trying and keep emphasizing how affiliation with you will meet their needs and interests.
- *Start simple and work your way up.* When you first approach potential supporters, show them how they can become involved in a very small way at little or no cost. Offer specific lists of benefits in exchange for specific types of support. Make sure not to sell yourself too cheaply, but a low level of support is better than no support. Once an organization or individual has become involved, suggest new ways of supporting your program in exchange for more tangible benefits. Most attitudes change slowly. You cannot expect large commitments right away, but any commitment can grow if you nourish the contact.

## **Asking for Financial Support**

When you approach people for financial support, be sure to have a clear plan outlining what they receive for various levels of support. Larger contributors should receive more benefits than smaller ones, but always have a level that almost any

sponsor could meet without difficulty. Think of your initial approach as a negotiation. Begin by asking for a higher level of support than someone is likely to give; you can always back away. Keep reminding her of the benefits she will receive. Your goal is to have her give something. Once she does, she is likely to continue, and may well increase her contribution.

To receive financial support, you will need:

- A legal status that allows your group to receive donations. You might need to look online to determine what is required in your jurisdiction or ask one of your central organizers or supporters to find out for you.
- A bank account in which to deposit funds.
- An accountant (even just a volunteer) who can provide documentation for and transparency on how much money was collected and how it was spent.

Give this information to potential donors very early in your conversation.

## **Grants**

Grants can provide meaningful sources of funding for your activities. Very few grants are available specifically for debates and debate-related activities. However, because many grants support the specific practices you will engage in as well as your general purposes, you can make your work with debate-related activities relevant to many grants. Debate, discussion, deliberation, and communication training can be a part of many potential grants. It is hard to get a grant “to promote debate,” but there are many to promote “citizen engagement,” “civic education,” “community organizing,” and other areas where your activities will fit in quite nicely.

You are not likely to receive a large grant early in the life of your group. Grantors are wary of giving large grants to small organizations because they have not shown the ability to manage large projects, so start by asking for small sums and increase your request as your program grows. Don't dismiss small grants; they not only help you financially but also indicate that others have faith in your program. You can point to them when asking for further support. Grantors keep a record of grantees and evaluate performance. Successful completion of one grant means you are more likely to get another from the same group. Perform poorly on a grant and you will have difficulty getting another.

### **THE GRANT PROCESS**

The grant process is simple. Either a government agency or private organization announces the grant and encourages groups to apply. Grants are announced through a process known as "calls for proposals." This is an announcement of specific programs along with details of the program, how to apply, who can apply, and deadlines for applications. Once applications are received, the granting organization reviews them and determines who will receive funding. The group receiving the grant then carries out the promised activities and, as a final step, submits a report to show what it has done. How the funds are distributed depends on the organization; you might receive all funds in advance or in segments. Each grant is different.

### **FINDING "CALLS"**

Conduct a comprehensive search to find grants that might be available to you. In terms of governments, look at municipal, regional, national, and international (such as European Union or United Nations) grant programs. Look for grants linked to

the subject areas in the next section of this chapter. Look for private groups and foundations in your area that might be offering grants. Many countries and regions have websites available that list new calls.

Some places to start in terms of looking for grants would be:

- Grants Alert, <http://www.grantsalert.com/>
- GetEdFunding, <http://www.getedfunding.com/>
- CTB/McGraw Hill International, <http://www.ctb.com/ctb.com/control/grantsMainViewAction?p=grants>

### **PRESENTING DEBATE ACTIVITIES**

When applying for a grant, you have to match your needs with grantor's interests. As I mentioned, few grants are available for debate, but you can use the information in Chapter 1 about the benefits of debate to connect your program with the grant. The overall goals of creating a true civil society often fit in with many grant categories, but you have to work to make your activities seem highly relevant. Often you will find that debate-related activities could address several different goals that funders may have. These include:

- *Empowering youth.* Many grants want to teach young people how to communicate logically and effectively and educate them about important issues that affect them and their society. You can certainly show that debate-related activities are useful here.
- *Creating leaders.* It's a truism that today's youth are the leaders of tomorrow. Building leadership skills is a powerful aspect of debate training. Leadership requires good public communication skills and the ability to frame complex issues logically, deal with those who may disagree, and negotiate compromises. The relationship between

leadership training and debate training is close. Use that relationship to your advantage.

- *Promoting democracy.* In countries that are in a transition to a more democratic society (and all societies could be more democratic), promoting democracy is a theme often found in grant calls. Of course, debate is an essential quality of a real democratic society.

Many grants call for a focus on a specific issue. Whether it is human trafficking, trade practices, school standards, environmental regulations, or any other important topic, debate can play a valid and valuable role in exploring it. A debater would research, frame arguments, hold public events about the issue, and hopefully engage others in the ongoing discussion. In many cases, this is exactly what funders want.

## **WRITING GRANTS**

Grant applications must be written to comply with the call and to energize and excite the reader. Use action language but try to remain concrete. Vague language can be a serious fault; it might suggest that you have not clearly thought out what you propose. Often, granting institutions provide specific guidance for new grant applicants (the University of Northern Colorado has such guidance at <http://www.unco.edu/osp/proposal/resources.html>), while other guides are more general. A number of books are available, but a large investment in an expensive book on grant writing may not be necessary. Beverley Browning has produced a very useful short guide, *Grant Writing for Dummies*. You should also look at a guide produced by SeaCoast Web Design (<http://www.npguides.org/>) and assistance provided by the University of Washington (<http://www.washington.edu/research/guide/grantwriting.html>).



When writing your grant proposal:<sup>2</sup>

- *Read the call very carefully.* Make sure that you are following all guidelines, especially in proposing a budget. Any error can doom your proposal, so be very careful.
- *Focus on what they want.* Determine the grantor's goals and then craft a proposal that shows how using debate activities can meet them. See things from their perspective but, of course, never try to deceive the funders. Instead, make the truth sound good to them. Use the language they use, use definitions that they provide, and be very careful to avoid overusing the word "debate." As we've seen, the components of debate (research, communication training, and decision making) will often fit in well with grantors' aims.
- *Make sure your proposal is realistic.* If your proposal sounds unrealistic to the funder, it will be rejected. And, if you can't deliver what you promise, you may not receive full funding and will risk future funding. Focus on debate-related activities and don't go beyond your area of expertise.
- *Reread and have others read.* Have other members of your group read both the call and your proposal. Ask an educated person who is not in your group to read it and give her reaction. If you can find someone with grant experience, ask him to review it for you. Take seriously all comments and adjust the proposal if necessary. Use the power of many minds to make your grant proposal effective.

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2. I would like to thank Bojana Skrt of Za in Proti Slovenia for this advice. She has received many large grants for a variety of purposes that all involve, at some fundamental level, debate-related activities.

- *Do not wait until the last minute.* You need time to reread and review. Often, your proposal will be better if you finish it well before the due date and let it sit for a week or so, then review it with a fresh eye. Send it in as instructed, but always do so at least a few days before the due date. Generally, a proposal that is even a bit late will not be accepted. You don't need the anguish of wondering whether it arrived on time.

### **Using the Grant**

When you have received a grant, you need to fully implement it. Whatever you proposed and was accepted, you must make a reality. Keep records and thus establish a track record. If you receive a grant, even a small one, make sure you document all activities, save all publicity related to it, archive training and other materials, and save photos and videos of any activities. Keep excellent financial records, as often funder standards are quite strict. For example, many funders (European Union is one) do not want just receipts for the purchase of travel tickets, they want the actual stubs from boarding passes to prove that they were used. Likewise, a funder may want proof from a bank that an invoice was paid, not just the invoice itself. Remember to include expenses for documentation and accounting in your budget; these are legitimate expenses.

When you have successfully completed a small grant, you are ready to move on to more applications and bigger projects. You have demonstrated your capacity to complete a project and thus you have earned the right to be considered for other and perhaps larger projects.

## **Conclusion**

Gaining publicity and support for your debate-related activities are not separate aspects of what you need to do. Publicity will increase support and increased support will increase participation. Both are essential to expanding your effort.

## **References**

Browning, Beverley. *Grant Writing for Dummies*. New York: Wiley, 2001.

## **Additional Materials**

Debate Central. "How to Start a Debate Club." <http://debate.uvm.edu/club.html>

National Debate Coaches Association. "Public Relations Package." <http://www.debatecoaches.org/page/public-relations-package>



## CHAPTER 6

# Staging Early Events

First impressions are important, so you have to get your early events right. If they go well, people will come back and more will come. If your events disappoint, your program could fail, at least in the short term.

You want to stage events that have the potential both to draw people and also encourage them to become involved. Don't start out staging complex events such as formal debate tournaments. Most people won't come because they know nothing about the activity, and those that do may become discouraged because they don't have the training to succeed in the event. Instead, focus on simple events—your regular meetings, training in public speaking, speak-out events on some issue of interest, discussions, panels, and simulations. These set the stage for future complex and debate-related events.

Hold your event at several convenient times so that more people can attend. Don't be discouraged if only a few show up. Be positive, present your best work, and all will be well. Very few events are well-attended the first time they are held.

After an event is over, people will remain behind to talk about their experience. Be sure to have core organizers there to answer questions, recruit the interested, and share ideas.

People are attracted not just by issues, but also by a desire for open, honest, and critical discussions.

## **The Purpose of Early Events**

Early events have more than one purpose, which is why they are so important. Your events are designed to:

- *Increase awareness of debate.* People may have very different ideas of what a “debate” is based on what they have seen in the media or in movies. Show them that debate is not some esoteric activity for the elite. Debating is for everyone, and joining your program will be fun as well as intellectually stimulating.
- *Create interest in your program.* People will come to your events to see if they’d be interested in your program, so any event should be engaging. Look for ways to fill your event with activity and mental stimulation. Ask a variety of your members to speak and include speakers who represent your target audience in terms of gender and ethnicity. Remember, each person who attends may become a strong supporter or even a central organizer.
- *Demonstrate your activity.* You’re showing your audience what you do. Whether it is a sample debate, training, or a public discussion, your event needs to highlight what it is you are offering—clear communication skills on display, a variety of perspectives, and an opportunity for people to lend their voices.
- *Increase involvement.* Asking new members to participate in early events is an easy way to increase their involvement and maintain their enthusiasm for the program.

## Introductory Events

The type of events you stage will depend on your specific goals and your resources. Some you might consider are: inviting people to your organizational meeting; offering training in public speaking; conducting a speak-out activity in which the public expresses their opinions on an issue; staging a sample debate; hosting a panel discussion, organizing public speaking contests; and offering a simulation.

### REGULAR BUSINESS MEETINGS

Inviting people to your organizational meetings will not draw those who know nothing about debate, but it will encourage those who have already expressed an interest to become involved. Involving people in the early stages of planning can increase their enthusiasm about and strengthen their ties to your project.

To ensure that you use meetings to your best advantage:

- *Schedule regular meetings.* Hold meetings at regular intervals and at set times. People are more likely to continue attending if the meeting becomes part of their schedule.
- *Hold efficient meetings.* One of the great fears people have about attending a debate meeting is that it will go on and on, with people talking too much about too little because they want to hear themselves talk. You can avoid this by:
  - Making efficiency a goal. Make sure that all attending agree that efficiency is a priority.
  - Setting and keeping to an agenda. Establish an agenda prior to the meeting and add any items people may have at the beginning of the session. If people ask for items to be added during the course of the meeting, delay them until the next session.

- Empowering a chairperson to move the meeting along. Your meeting does not have to follow formal rules of order. The chair should make sure everyone is heard and no one monopolizes the conversation, but he or she should decide whether the issue should be resolved immediately or delayed for further discussion.
- Maintaining focus. Keep the discussion focused on the business of the group. The chair should discourage irrelevant comments and social banter.

### **PUBLIC SPEAKING TRAINING**

One of the most important introductory events you can hold is public speaking training. It provides an opportunity for people to acquire needed and desired skills. In addition, such training is an excellent prelude to participation in a debate or discussion—even an experienced speaker can benefit from such training. These training sessions should be scheduled often and should not last more than one hour. Groups should be kept small so that everyone has a chance to participate and to allow the trainer time to provide detailed feedback for each individual. If you have more than 10 people, divide the group and use multiple trainers.

#### **Goals**

The goals of public speaking training are simple. Participants should be taught the basic aspects of public speaking: verbal messages (language choices, message structures, making arguments); nonverbal signals (gestures, body language, variation in rates of delivery, volume, and voice tone); and aspects of audience comprehension and attention (making sure the audience understands the message and remains interested). Trainees should have a chance to speak (1–2 minutes only), receive feedback, and speak again (see Chapter 7). They

should come away with a better understanding of the activity and their strengths and weaknesses as public speakers. Since many people find public speaking stressful, keep the event low pressure and friendly, with lots of smiles and mutual encouragement.

### **Process**

You will need one moderately trained facilitator per speaking group (10 or fewer). Experienced debaters can serve as trainers. The session would proceed as follows:

1. Welcome everyone and ask facilitators to introduce themselves.
2. The facilitator explains why public speaking is important to personal and professional success.
3. The facilitator discusses the key aspects of public speaking such as voice, nonverbal communication, and language choices. (You can find a sample talk online [Snider, 2012, <https://vimeo.com/44980607>], although it's a bit longer than should be used in this setting.)
4. Students are given a simple topic, have them prepare for 2 or 3 minutes, and then speak for 2 minutes.
5. Facilitator comments on each speech (some praise and some criticism).
6. If time permits, everyone speaks again, trying to improve.

Participants should be invited to later sessions that may feature longer speaking times; eventually, they will move on to speaking about actual debate topics and motions. Public speaking is a skill, repetition helps improve it.



## **SPEAK-OUT EVENTS**

A speak-out activity is an event in which the public is invited to express their opinions on an important issue. Policymakers, businesspersons, and government officials may also be invited, but they participate simply as citizens. Staging these events can be a valuable way to build awareness of your group, create awareness of and activism around an important issue, share knowledge, and establish the basis for future activities.

### **Identifying the Subject**

For your event to be a success, pick an issue that will attract an audience. It should be a topic that the community is already concerned about. The issue doesn't have to be local—it could be regional, national, or international. Consult members of your club or potential participants to determine whether the issue is suitable. Use the subject in the title of the event but make sure to be balanced in your phrasing. Posing the title as a question is often useful. An event titled “Save the Forest” or “We Need Woodcutting” is not very balanced. An alternative title in question form might be, “How can we best utilize local forest resources?”

### **Format Design**

The format for such an event can be designed in many different ways. Below are two as examples that have, in my experience, worked well:

#### **Format 1: Interested parties plus the public (60–90 minutes)**

- Moderator, who will enforce time limits, welcomes the audience and explains the event.
- Short statement by an interested party, usually an invited individual with a personal stake in the issue (5–8 minutes).

- Another interested party makes a short statement.
- A member of your group makes a short statement highlighting issues (5 minutes).
- Another member of your group makes a short statement highlighting issues (5 minutes).
- Audience members ask the speakers questions, with 1-minute questions and 2-minute answers maximum (25–35 minutes).
- Volunteers from the audience make short speeches (2–3 minutes). Approach these individuals at the beginning of the event and informally ask them if they would speak.
- A member of your group summarizes the issues (3 minutes).
- Another member of your group summarizes the issues, focusing on what the previous person did not discuss (3 minutes).
- Moderator closes the meeting.
- Reception (perhaps with refreshments) for further informal discussion of the issues.

### **Format 2: Public Meeting (60–90 minutes)**

- Moderator, who will enforce time limits, welcomes the audience and explains the event.
- Member of your group presents background on the issue (6–8 minutes).
- Members of the audience offer short (2–3 minutes) remarks.
- Moderator requests audience to submit questions on the issue while members of the audience continue to speak.

- Moderator invites members of the audience who think they can answer important questions to come to the stage. Two members from your group (one on each side of the issue) also come to the stage.
- Moderator chooses submitted questions to ask the individuals on stage (limit answers to two.) (20 minutes).
- Members of your group summarize the issues at stake from different perspectives (4 minutes each).
- Moderator closes the meeting and announces future events to be held by your group.
- Reception for further informal discussion of the issues.

### **SAMPLE DEBATE EVENT**

It is important for your group to demonstrate what a debate is so potential members as well as the community understand what you're doing. One good way to do this is to stage a sample debate.

### **Identifying and Preparing Participants**

Choose your debaters with your recruiting goal in mind. Don't use highly accomplished debaters. If the demonstration showcases only your best debaters, members of the audience may be reluctant to join because they may think that they can't perform at the same level. Use debaters with a reasonable level of competence and have them debate a topic that has good arguments on both sides. It is essential that the audience imagine that they can do what they are watching.

Preparation of debaters should focus on sharing arguments and strategies. Both sides need to know what the other will be saying so that they can improve their arguments and evidence. You don't necessarily have to hold a practice debate.

Most formal debates are largely extemporaneous, so a fully rehearsed and non-spontaneous debate would be deceptive to the audience.

### **Topic selection**

The topic should be of legitimate local interest. While the issue might be global, it should be something that citizens are concerned about. Ask your members what sort of topic interests people. It's also important to select a topic about which there is some division in your community. For example, a debate of "The factory in our town X should not be closed" might lead to a rather one-sided discussion. Feel free to consult the topic lists found at Debate Motion Central (<http://debatemotioncentral.blogspot.com/>).

### **Format Design**

If you have decided on a specific debate format for your later activities, use that in the demonstration. (Popular debate formats are discussed in Appendix 1.) Because this debate will be a first-time experience for many in the audience, you may need to make some adjustments. Based on my experience, here are some format guidelines:

- The debate should take less than 60 minutes.
- The debate should have a very short opening and closing, each less than a minute.
- The debate should involve at least four speakers, with a mix of men and women, ages, etc.
- Speeches should be no longer than 5–7 minutes.
- The speakers should be interactive through either cross-examination or points of information.

- The audience should be invited to participate near the end of the event (either questions after the debate or before the last summary speeches).

### **Staging Issues**

Configure the room so that there is a podium or small table in the front middle of the space, at least one table on each side, and rows of chairs facing the podium and tables. Unless it is a large space, you will not need a microphone or public address system. Have a member of your club keep time and introduce speakers.

### **Audience Involvement**

Audience involvement helps recruitment. When audience members become involved in some small, simple way, they realize that debate is not an esoteric activity for the elite but something they can, and will, enjoy.

You can involve your audience in several ways. Members can ask questions of the debaters or make 1-minute statements on the topic. In either case, carefully monitor time and keep comments short to avoid audience boredom. The former works better if you think the audience will be reluctant to become involved.

### **Managing Disagreement**

Make sure that your event illustrates debate's focus on respectful disagreement. Remind your debaters to be polite to one another and avoid self-indulgent personal jibes that the audience will misinterpret. Tell your debaters to smile even while disagreeing.

### **The Decision**

You have three ways to end the debate: the audience decides, a judge(s) decides, or you have no decision. The audience can

vote on the winner either by a show of hands or by leaving by different doors (used by many university debating societies, but it does mean the decision is a bit more obscure). If you choose the different doors method, you then announce the result later through your communication network. You can use judges, although I don't recommend doing so for public debates because the judges may become the focus instead of the arguments. If you use judges, make sure they are impartial and have some debating experience. If you decide not to have a formal decision, encourage all to make their own determination, which, after all, is the most important one.

## **INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES**

Involvement activities are events other than debate and recruiting sessions that you can use to attract and keep new members. These are stand-alone events with value, but they also are excellent entry events into your group. They are similar to debates (in that people speak, issues are discussed, and different opinions are welcomed), but are not centered around disagreement, which makes some people uncomfortable. These events can attract people for the same reasons as a debate, but will appeal to a different set of people. Three that you might want to consider using are discussions, public speaking contests, and simulations.

### **Discussions**

Invite individuals involved with an issue of interest to be on a panel with members of your group. Have four to six on the panel and encourage comments and questions from the audience.

## **Public Speaking Contests**

These can be very useful if you are trying to attract school students and for finding ways for your group to engage with and cooperate with schools. The contests do not need to be large events and may take place in the school—either in assemblies or in classrooms.

When you are organizing the event, you need to:

- Contact schools or other groups to see if they are interested in cooperating.
- Develop a broad topic for speakers, such as “our city in the future,” or “what our generation must do differently.”
- Publicize the contest and allow people to sign up both in person and online.
- If you have more than five contestants, hold preliminary contests. Then stage a final event.
- Ask members of your organization to act as judges (odd numbers make it easier to break ties) or invite prominent local citizens.
- Award a trophy or plaque to the winner. Cash prizes are nice but not necessary.

## **Simulations**

A number of activities similar to debate may be more appealing to some individuals because in these activities they are playacting and not really speaking as themselves. In these events, speakers assume other roles, for example, legislators, judges, or diplomats. Simulations are of common real-world events and are thus familiar to potential participants. They often work well with school and university students. Remember, the goal is to get people to speak and craft arguments

about important issues—debating is certainly not the only way to do so.

Two events you might want to try are: mock trial and Model Parliament or Model UN. A mock trial mimics the experience of a courtroom trial that most of us are familiar with—audience members play roles, including juror, attorney, bailiff. A number of sample cases available from the Seattle YMCA (<http://www.seattlemca.org/Locations/YouthAndGovernment/Pages/MockTrial.aspx>) and the Texas High School Mock Trial Competition (<http://www.regonline.com/builder/site/tab3.aspx?EventID=1136762>). Advice on how to structure and hold such an event can be found on page 68 of *Many Sides: Debate Across the Curriculum* by Alfred Snider and Maxwell Schnurer.

A Model Parliament or United Nations simulates a session of those bodies. In these events, people take on the role of members of parliament or representatives of some of the countries of the world to debate one or two issues. In the latter case, participants advocate the position of the nation they represent.

## **PUBLICITY AND DOCUMENTATION**

Obviously, your events won't be successful unless you have an audience. Plan publicity well in advance and use all the methods outlined in Chapter 5. Remember that your goal is not just to have a successful event but to expand your active membership. Identify and ask interested populations to attend and invite community groups that might be interested. Contact the media to publicize your event and suggest that they cover it as a news story. In short, use your entire communication system.

Your publicity efforts shouldn't end with the event. Make sure to use your entire information distribution system to



spread the word about what happened. Document your event using a small video camera or even a video camera on a mobile phone. Upload the video to your website and distribute links among your members through your communication channels. Also, compile a written report with photos from the event and circulate it. Write an article for the organizational newsletter and/or blog and then send the piece on with a few pictures to media outlets that might be interested. Use Twitter to send links when they are available. Post-event publicity not only builds solidarity for your group but also encourages those who did not attend to come to future events.

## **Utilizing Human Resources in Early Events**

Throughout this chapter, I've emphasized the need to use these events to recruit additional members. However, they can also be very valuable in developing the skills and abilities of those who are already in your group and may take part in these events. Newer members of your group should be encouraged to become part of organizing and staging these events. Such involvement will give them a sense of ownership as well as seeing themselves as capable.

### **TRAINING AND INVOLVING NEW CORE MEMBERS**

You can't just tell new people to organize an event. Pair them with more experienced members to accomplish tasks. You will need to describe tasks in detail and encourage the experienced individual to welcome requests for help and advice.

Always remember that you are training new members for the long term, so:

- Rotate tasks to help core members gain expertise. Once newer members have been successfully involved with one event, ask them to take on a different role for the next. Explain that changing roles will make them better-rounded event organizers and prepare them for major roles in the future. Indeed, after being involved in several small events, they will be ready to organize major events.
- Give praise and credit. The newer the member, the more praise and credit you should give. As I have said as a coach, the most important people at a debate tournament are those who are attending for the first time. If the event goes well, they will come again; if it doesn't, this may well be their last experience. The same is true of new organizers and volunteers. Make sure they feel appreciated and valued and they will become more valuable in the future.

## Conclusion

Early events are the most important. They can help your group grow, raise its profile in the community, and train newer members. These initial events are very important steps you must take to achieve larger goals. For example, if you want to organize a successful debate tournament, a sample debate can help pave the way. To have a successful debating program, you need dedicated people with appropriate skills, community awareness, and support. These early events can help create these necessary elements.

## Additional Materials

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## CHAPTER 7

# Training Techniques for Critical Advocacy

This chapter, one of the most important in the book, focuses on what should be your highest goal. Obviously you want to get people interested in debating and joining your group, but your strongest focus should be on educating as many people as possible in the skills of critical thinking, public speaking, argument design, and decision making. Thus, training is core to your mission.

### **Basics of Sustainable Training**

Let me begin by outlining some basic assumptions behind successful debate training systems.

- *Training is sequential, moving from the easy to more challenging topics.* Many training exercises can be used throughout an individual's debating career. However, they are employed most effectively by starting with the more basic exercises and working toward the more complex. This chapter presents them that way.

- *Repetition is important.* Since the exercises teach skills, repetition is essential. Only by constant practice can a debater improve.
- *Training must be active.* If the group has to listen to a long lecture, learning falls short. They need to be thinking, speaking, practicing, and then practicing even more. Always keep those at the training involved and active.
- *Training should involve debating a variety of topics.* Many debate formats require that topics (also called “motions”) be changed frequently; therefore those being trained should be exposed to a wide variety of issues. Varying topics will also challenge your trainees. If participants are asked to debate different motions, they cannot copy the arguments of those who spoke earlier and must develop their own ideas. Debate Motion Central <http://debatemotioncentral.blogspot.com/> offers topics from more than 260 debate tournaments worldwide.
- *Speeches should be short.* Limit speeches to 1–4 minutes. Why? First, a person doesn’t have to speak for a long time for you to hear problems in delivery, organization, or argument development. Second, if everyone delivers a short speech, you have time to repeat them. Third, short speeches can mean shorter training sessions. People dislike lengthy sessions and might not return if they think the sessions are too long.
- *Sessions should start and end on time.* When people come to a training exercise, they are giving one of their most valuable resources, their time. People have to fit training into their busy schedules. If you start on time, people will realize that they must arrive on time. If you end on time, they will know that they can move on to their next activity.

Committing yourself to start and end promptly will also force you to use every minute of the time you have.

- *Training should have a regular schedule.* Have trainings on the same day and at the same time each week. Regularly scheduled sessions are useful because people can build their training into their weekly schedules. You may have to modify this practice for university debaters who often have varying class schedules. My university team has three or four trainings a week, and we encourage people to come to the sessions that fit their schedule.
- *Training should utilize peer trainers.* I strongly believe in peer learning. We have much to teach one another, and debate groups often have a shortage of highly skilled trainers. Those with more experience (even just a bit more) can be extremely valuable as leaders in these training activities. And, of course, those who train learn from the exercise. Using peer trainers also empowers people and increases their commitment to the group.
- *Each debater should create a training booklet.* Encourage those attending training events to take notes. Debaters will find their booklets handy not only in the near term while they are preparing for and during debates, but in the long term when they become facilitators. Encourage them to keep their notes in a permanent journal rather than on random sheets of paper so that they are easily accessible and, therefore, more valuable.
- *Training should be fun.* To keep people coming, you must make training fun. Try to maintain a light atmosphere that encourages occasional laughter. Always include positive comments when giving criticism and never take yourself too seriously.

## Training Exercises

Below are some basic training exercises you can use to teach debating skills. Each sets out goals, procedure, and cautions (or difficulties to look out for) about using the exercise. Many of the exercises are described in the following videos, which you might want to watch while planning your training sessions:

International Debate Academy Slovenia 2011, <https://vimeo.com/32747688>

World Schools Debate Academy 2010, <https://vimeo.com/13450158> and <https://vimeo.com/13450759>

I've included just a few of the exercises and drills that are available. See the resource list at the end of this chapter for additional suggestions.

When planning your training sessions, analyze your debaters' weaknesses and then use appropriate drills and exercises to address these. Make sure to evaluate the exercises you are using to ensure that they are working for your group. Ask participants which they learned the most from, which they enjoyed the most, and which helped them the most when they actually debated.

## SPEAKING

### Warm-up Speeches and a Short Debate (Basic)

#### Goals:

- Help debaters overcome their initial nervousness about public speaking.

- Help debaters overcome their fear of participating in a debate.
- Identify and work on significant problems—e.g., difficulties with English, serious speech anxiety.

**Procedure:**

*Introduction*

Explain the importance of public speaking skills. Tell debaters that we all need to improve our skills and that they will be able to do so in a comfortable learning environment.

*Part One: Short Speeches*

1. Ask debaters to give 1-minute speeches on a topic they know well, for example:
  - favorite pet animal
  - favorite vacation spot
  - least favorite media figure
  - worst movie ever seen
  - “I wish my parents would . . .”
  - “I wish my school would . . .”
  - favorite subject in school
  - favorite sport
  - gadget they most want
2. After each speech, mention two things the speaker did well and one that needs improvement.

*Part Two: Short Debate*



1. Divide the class into pairs and assign each a motion or proposition. One debater will speak for 2 minutes in support of it, the other in opposition.
2. Give the class 5 minutes to prepare **one** major argument for their side. Tell them to remember what they need to work on from their previous speech.
3. Ask one pair to begin the exercise. Have one of the pair give his speech while the other takes notes. Have the second give her speech.
4. Give the speakers your feedback. Be positive, but notice whether they have improved. Ask the speakers to make comments on any feature of the speech they wish.
5. Repeat the procedure with the remaining pairs.

### *Part Three: Refutation*

1. If you have time, give debaters 3 minutes to prepare a 1-minute answer to the other side's speeches.
2. Ask each pair to speak and then give them your feedback.

### **Cautions:**

- Be alert for those experiencing a lot of speech anxiety, shyness, etc. BUT, make each person speak. Then show your support, "I knew you could do it . . ." You may need to give a word of encouragement, such as "talk about that more" if they begin to falter.
- Emphasize improvement rather than skill level. Just getting better is what is important.

## **Public Speaking** (advanced)

### **Goals:**

- Identify specific weaknesses in how debaters deliver a speech.
- Train debaters to critique others—and thus themselves.
- Create climate of constructive mutual criticism.

### **Procedure:**

#### *Phase One: Inventory*

1. Ask for five volunteers. One will be the speaker and the other four will act as “critics,” paying attention to and commenting on: language use (including crutch words (“um,” “like,” etc.); hand gestures; face and body movements; and overall style. Assign each critic a number from 1 to 4.
2. Have a debater suggest a topic on which he or she will speak immediately (speaking problems are more readily apparent if debaters are unprepared). The speech should last about 2 minutes. Then invite the four critics to make brief comments. Add your comments. Ask the speaker to write down the comments. Then ask critic 1 to speak and the previous speaker to become a critic. Repeat the procedure until all members of the group have spoken.

#### *Phase Two: Working on Two Items*

1. Choose a new topic. In their groups of five, have each speaker remind the group of the areas in which he or she needed improvement and ask each to speak for 2 minutes on the topic, focusing on those areas.
2. Have debater critics evaluate the speaker.

3. Congratulate speakers if they improve.

*Phase Three: Extreme Speakers (if you have time)*

1. Pick a speaker who has a very boring style and ask him to speak for 1 minute on one of his previous topics in an overly dramatic way. This exercise in overcompensation can be very effective.
2. If he still isn't very dramatic, speak loudly and say, "Is that as dramatic as you can get?" or "Come on, sound like you really care!"

**Adverse Conditioning** (advanced)

**Goals:**

- Train debaters to accept criticism.
- Create climate of constructive mutual criticism.

**Procedure:**

1. Have each speaker indicate a major problem she has. Ask her to make a 2-minute speech; every time she makes this mistake have the audience boo, make fun of her, or throw little bits of paper. Keep it mellow and friendly.

OR

2. If she makes a mistake, have her start over.

**Cautions:**

- Watch your time.
- Don't allow "critics" to go on too long—get to the point.

- Don't think you always have to comment if the critics have done well.
- Keep the exercise lighthearted.
- Give positive feedback when debaters improve.

## **MAKING AND REFUTING ARGUMENTS**

### **Presenting Arguments**

#### **Goals:**

- Show debaters the proper structure of a single argument: title, thesis, body, support, impact. You can find this information in the sample instructions at <https://vimeo.com/17454380>.
- Help debaters identify their weaknesses and repair them.
- Review a variety of topics to show the broad range of what can be debated.

#### **Procedure:**

1. Give each debater a different topic.
2. Ask debaters to build one major 3-minute argument for that topic. Caution them not to put the whole topic into one argument.
3. Ask each debater to present her argument.
4. Criticize the presentation and show where it needs improvement.

5. If you have time, have the class deliver their improved arguments.

**Cautions:**

- Make sure the argument includes all elements—title, thesis, body, support, impact—and that debaters are not simply repeating assertions.
- Keep the process moving so that all can present their initial argument and some can offer their improved version.

## **Argument Type Identification**

**Goals:**

- Acquaint participants with the basic types of arguments: induction, deduction, and causal.
- Get participants to write examples of the three types of arguments.
- Demonstrate that all arguments have weaknesses and can be criticized.

**Procedure:**

This exercise should be done in groups of 10 or fewer.

1. Describe the basic types of arguments, using the instructions at <http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/argumenttypes.pdf> and give some examples. Answer any questions participants may have.
2. Assign each participant a different argument type and have her compose an argument (one or two sentences) of that type.

3. Have her share her simple argument with the group.
4. Invite members of the group to briefly discuss any weaknesses in this argument. Ask other group members to suggest improvement.
5. After all participants have presented their arguments, rotate the argument types.

**Cautions:**

- Don't spend too much time in describing the types of arguments.
- Don't spend too much time on each argument. The purpose of the exercise is to give people multiple chances to engage with an argument type.
- Encourage individuals when their arguments are criticized. Point out that they will always face criticism and that criticism is the essence of debating.

**Critique of Sample Arguments**

**Goals:**

- Help participants quickly identify types of arguments.
- Help participants identify what is wrong with a sample argument.
- Demonstrate that all arguments have some weaknesses.
- Help participants use common arguments as the first step in the process of building toward a debate using more complex arguments.

**Procedure:**

1. If you have not already done so in the previous exercise, describe the basic types of arguments, using the instructions at <http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/argumenttypes.pdf> and give some examples. Answer any questions.
2. Distribute the sample arguments found at [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/sample\\_arguments.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/sample_arguments.pdf) or read the arguments to the participants.
3. Organize 10–12 participants in a circle. Give each a different argument. Then ask each participant to identify the argument type (easier) or ask them to identify the type of argument and then ask, “What is wrong with this argument?” (more difficult).
4. Help the debater answer the question or encourage other debaters to give their opinions.
5. Most arguments have more than one problem, so potentially all group members can be involved with each argument.
6. Discuss as many arguments as possible in a short period of time.

**Cautions:**

- Don't spend too much time describing the types of arguments.
- Don't spend too much time on each argument. The purpose of the exercise is to give your group multiple chances to engage with an argument type and individual arguments.
- Point out any faults in an argument that the debaters have missed.

- Give those debaters who seem challenged by the activity easier arguments.
- Don't let some debaters monopolize the conversation. If you think this might become an issue, have the person to the debater's right make suggestions. This procedure ensures that all participate.

## **Finding Forms of Support**

### **Goals:**

- Help debaters learn about the different forms of support for an argument.
- Help debaters learn how to locate different forms of support on a given topic.
- Help debaters learn how to brainstorm and how brainstorming can help generate ideas.

### **Procedure:**

1. Discuss the forms of support available for debate arguments using the list on [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/forms\\_of\\_support.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/forms_of_support.pdf).
2. Give the group a topic and have them brainstorm arguments and the types of support they might use for each. (The process of brainstorming is described in Chapter 4.) Make sure they have found at least one form of support for each argument.
3. Have them evaluate each proposed suggestion.
4. Have them choose which form of support they think best for each argument.



**Cautions:**

- Make sure they are using strong arguments. If necessary, suggest some arguments.
- Make sure they understand the different types of support.
- Watch your time and do not linger too long at one step

**Refuting Arguments****Goals:**

- Teach debaters how to identify the most important arguments and refute them.
- Teach them to use the proper structure for refuting.
- Teach them to refute quickly and efficiently.

**Procedure:**

Note: See guidelines for refutation: <https://vimeo.com/32561736>

1. Pick a topic for which they previously developed arguments and give the group a few minutes to prepare to refute the best argument they originally designed. Have them refute it in a 3-minute speech.
2. After discussion, have them refute it in 2 minutes.

**Cautions:**

- Make sure they hit the best argument, not the weakest.
- Make sure they do not spend too much time repeating the argument they are answering.

## **DEALING WITH TOPICS**

### **Analyzing Types**

#### **Goals:**

- Help debaters understand that all topics are not of the same type.
- Help debaters understand how to handle different types of topics.
- Help debaters gain experience in addressing topics in ways that help them succeed.

#### **Procedure:**

1. Review the different types of topics using the material found in [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/types\\_of\\_topics.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/types_of_topics.pdf). Mention that debate “topics” can also be called “motions.”
2. After offering examples of each type and answering questions, assign a topic to each debater. Give them 2–3 minutes to determine how they will interpret that topic. Urge debaters not to be too self-serving in their interpretations. They need to set up a good debate, not run from the major issues. Tell debaters to take into account what they think the major opposition or negative argument will be and to consider this when they interpret the motion.
3. Discuss how some topics might be interpreted as different types and participants to pick the type they think they can be successful in supporting. For example, “This House believes that parents should not hit their children” can be debated as policy or value, but would probably be better advocated as a value topic because the particulars

of how you would prevent parents from hitting a child or how enforcing a no-hitting policy could be rather daunting.

4. Have each debater tell the group what kind of topic he or she has chosen and how they would interpret it (standard for fact, define term for value, model for policy as well as definitions of other key words).
5. At the end, review what debaters have learned and answer any questions.

**Cautions:**

- Watch the time. Make sure all debaters get a chance to discuss their topic.
- When a topic might fall into different type categories, ask debaters to discuss which way they would rather advocate it.
- Avoid allowing debaters to include too much detail, especially in a plan or model, which leaves the impression that they are running away from the major issues.

**Building Plans (Models)**

**Goals:**

- Help debaters learn to identify policy motions that require a plan.
- Help debaters build detailed plans without unduly narrowing the debate.  
Help debaters anticipate major opposition arguments.

**Procedure:**

1. Discuss how to building plans based on [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/models\\_and\\_plans.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/models_and_plans.pdf).
2. Discuss the example given (This House would legalize prostitution). Ask debaters what else they would include and what they would leave out.
3. Give each debater a different motion and give him 5 minutes to outline a plan using the guidelines in the pdf.
4. Have each debater present his or her plan to the group.
5. Ask questions such as, “What major opposition arguments do you anticipate and how do you plan to deal with them? Has anything important been left out? Are you narrowing the debate too much? Can you anticipate the arguments of the other team and clarify your proposal through definition?”
6. After you ask these questions of the first two debaters, have participants ask the questions of the other debaters.

**Cautions:**

- Have participants aim for word economy in building their plans.
- Make sure to keep the session moving so all will have a chance to contribute.
- Make clear that no plan is perfect.

## **Building Cases**

### **Goals:**

- Teach debaters how to brainstorm complex topics.
- Teach them how to select and organize their best arguments.
- Have debaters learn from the topics other debaters are working on.
- Help debaters find support for their arguments.
- Have debaters develop a basic understanding of every topic you deal with in this session.
- Help debaters discover good arguments on a variety of topics.

### **Procedure:**

#### *Phase One: Build Cases*

1. Organize debaters into pairs: one debater is the proposition and the other the opposition. Give each pair a topic and allow them 10 minutes to work on their best three arguments. Have each proposition present her ideas (not as a speech, but in a discussion) for 5 minutes, including definitions (if needed), plan for action (if needed), two arguments for a first speech, and a third argument for a second speech. (This presentation is appropriate for the WUDC format—the world’s most popular.) Then have the opposition do the same. Even if you are preparing for other formats, three major arguments are good for an exercise such as this.
2. Make sure everyone is taking notes about all topics. Comment on the presentations and make concrete suggestions

for improvement. You can allow a few debaters to make comments, but don't spend too much time on each topic so everyone has a chance to present his arguments.

#### *Phase Two: Better Cases*

1. Give debaters 5 minutes to make adjustments and then present their basic ideas again, BUT now ask them to include examples and other forms of support.
2. After each presentation have debaters suggest other examples or forms of support.

#### *Phase Three: Beauty Contest*

If you have time:

1. Choose two cases the debaters presented.
2. Have debaters argue in 1-minute speeches why one is better than the other.

## **Impossible Topics**

### **Goals:**

- Help debaters increase their creativity when dealing with unfamiliar topics.
- Help debaters deal with seemingly one-sided topics.
- Help debaters learn to benefit from the creativity of others.

### **Procedure:**

1. Give each debater a topic from this list [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/impossible\\_topics.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/impossible_topics.pdf).

2. Assign each debater to the side opposite the one she would prefer.
3. Give debaters 8 minutes to identify four major arguments they would make.
4. Have each debater either present the list to the group informally or give a 4–5 minute speech about three of those arguments.
5. Ask debaters to identify the weakest of the arguments presented.
6. Ask debaters to suggest arguments that were not made that would have been better.

**Cautions:**

- Keep the session serious; frivolity may decrease creativity.
- Watch your time and make sure everyone gets to present his topic and arguments.
- Assign more unusual topics to those who seem more able (or who request a special challenge) and the easier topics to those who seem unsure and shy.

**INTERACTION**

**Points of Information**

**Goals:**

- Develop strong skills in offering points of information.  
Develop strong skills in replying to points of information.

**Procedure:**

1. For guidance on teaching points of information (POI), see <https://vimeo.com/48153250>.
2. Give each debater a topic and have the class write these down. Give the debaters 7–8 minutes to outline a very brief first proposition or opposition speech for the topic.
3. Tell participants that they are also to search for arguments, and thus points to pose, on each topic.
4. Have a debater speak on his topic, but after 1 to 1½ minutes pound the table and ask other members of the group to start offering points of information (POI). All debaters must pose points. The speaker **MUST** take all points.
5. Evaluate each POI and response: Is the question too long or too easy? Are answers too long or weak? Feel free to interject these comments during the speech, but do not let others do so.

**Cautions:**

- Make speeches long enough so that everyone gets to offer POIs. (Determine the number of minutes you have in the session, subtract 10 minutes for preparation for the drill and comments you will make [very brief, no more than 2 minutes per speaker], divide the remaining time by the number of speakers, and you will then know how long to make speeches for this exercise).
- Debaters should model good practice and behavior as shown in the video <https://vimeo.com/48153250>. Discourage “flagging” of points (indicating the content of the point when asking to be recognized). Flagging interferes with the debate and can become disruptive.



- Watch the time. Before the first speech is given, use the formula above to calculate how long speeches can be based on the time remaining and the number of debaters in your group.

## **Cross-examination**

### **Goals:**

- Help debaters determine how to compose and ask effective questions.
- Help debaters learn to analyze and then properly answer questions.
- Help debaters learn how to set and avoid traps in cross-examination.

### **Procedure:**

Note: For guidance in teaching cross-examination, see <https://vimeo.com/26720657>.

1. Arrange the participants in pairs.
2. Give each pair a different topic and have one person support the topic and the other oppose it.
3. Ask each participant to create a 3-minute speech in support of his or her side of the topic. Give them 4–5 minutes to do so.
4. Have each pair give their speeches and then answer questions from the assembled group.
5. Comment on good and bad efforts at questions and answers.

**Cautions:**

- Watch the time to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate.
- Avoid being too critical of newer participants.
- Praise strong efforts.

**SPECIFIC TRAINING ACTIVITIES**

These training activities are a bit more advanced but can be introduced after participants have been in at least one debate.

**Locating Principles****Goals:**

- To discover what a principle is.
- To learn how to express principles properly
- To learn how to use principle to build arguments and team lines.

**Procedures:**

Note: For background on this subject, see the lecture at <https://vimeo.com/7929633>.

1. Explain that a principle is a general maxim that most people would accept and that the judges will respond to with “yes.” A principle needs to be phrased generally but should have a clear application to the topic.
2. Divide the group up into pairs: one proposition, and one opposition.

3. Provide each pair a topic and give them 20 seconds to think of the principle for their side and integrate it into a one-sentence team line (the general position that a team will favor reduced to a simple sentence).
4. Ask each team to discuss their analysis. Help them word the principle and suggest alternatives.
5. Tell all participants to take notes on the topics and principles.

**Cautions:**

- Don't spend too much time on one topic.
- Focus on how participants phrase their principle; make sure it is a complete thought, a snappy phrase (short, to the point and using lively language), and a statement most would agree with.
- Contrast the two opposing principles on one topic and ask the group which side is more likely to win.

## **Mini-Debates of Various Sizes**

**Goals:**

- Work on general debate skills, but save time. Debaters often learn as much from a mini-debate as from a full debate.
- Work with a flexible number of people.

**Procedures:**

1. Choose your debate format and divide the participants into teams and sides—one on one, two on two, three on three, etc.
2. Give each mini-debate a different topic and tell the teams that they have 15 minutes to prepare arguments (or you may ask them to prepare in advance). Ask them to focus on an entire range of issues or on just one or two central issues in speeches that take up half the time allotted in the debate format you are working on. (For example, if the debate calls for 7-minute speeches, limit the speeches to 3½ minutes.)
3. Have the debate using shorter speeches.
4. Critique each speech or each debate.

**Cautions:**

- Make sure the debaters focus on important arguments and develop them well, rather than present a larger number of arguments in a more shallow fashion.
- Encourage participants to stay after the event and give their speech again.

**Long Table Debates****Goals:**

- Get many people involved in one debate.
- Teach participants how to refute an argument.

- Teach participants how to develop new and different arguments.

**Procedure:**

1. Give the group a topic. Divide the group into two sides, “Yes” and “No” and arrange their desks or chairs in two rows facing each other.
2. Explain that the first speaker has 3 minutes to present an argument for “Yes.” Each speaker following (alternating between “Yes” and “No”) gives a 3-minute speech in which she or he refutes the argument just made by the other side and presents a *new* argument supporting her or his side.
3. After each speech, evaluate the refutation and whether the argument was actually new.
4. After the last speech, applaud the participants.

**Cautions:**

- Pick a common issue around which many arguments have been presented so that the exercise is not too challenging.
- Be fairly strict about what is and is not a new argument.
- Congratulate people even if they do only part of the exercise well. Always highlight the positive.

**Judging**

**Goals:**

- Help debaters understand how debates are judged.  
Help debaters prepare to be judges.

**Procedure:**

1. Ask debaters to serve as judges for practice debates. Use the most experienced debaters, but not the same ones all the time.
2. Tell them they need to become the kind of judges that they want judging them when they debate.
3. Have them watch and then critique the debate.
4. Ask those who were judged to evaluate the critique given.
5. Following the debate, have those who acted as judges give you a short written list of what they learned from judging that will make them a better debater.

**Cautions:**

- Encourage new judges to keep their comments short and balanced between positive and negative.
- Make sure that critiques contain constructive comments and not personal criticisms.
- Make sure each debater judge gets an equal opportunity to comment on the debate.

**Debate Topic Construction****Goals:**

- Learn to build topics.
- Learn how to analyze topics and their components.
- Learn how to understand what those who compose topics might be thinking.

**Procedure:**

Note: For background on topic development, see chapter five <http://idebate.org/sites/live/files/9781932716177.pdf>.

1. Discuss what debaters should keep in mind when building topics. Remind participants that topics should be interesting; balanced; support change; be worded in an elegant, neutral fashion; not be too broad; and should have one central idea.
2. Divide participants into pairs. Give each pair an area of contemporary controversy. Have them draft at least two topics from this controversy.
3. Ask each pair to present their topics to the group and critique them based on the criteria for topic building given earlier.
4. Ask the other participants which of these topics they would most want to debate if they did not know what side they would be on.

**Cautions:**

- Make sure participants adhere to the criteria discussed above.
- Have something positive and something constructively critical to say about each topic.
- Point out when two topics from the same controversy area are too similar.

## Tournament Tabulation

### Goal:

- Help debaters understand how debate tournaments are tabulated.
- Learn about the software available for tournament tabulation.

### Procedure:

1. Have those designated to do the tabulation run a practice tournament on the software selected. Major tabulation programs can be found at <http://debate.uvm.edu/software.html>. The recommended software packages for tournament tabulation include:
  - TRPC for PC by Rich Edwards of Baylor University, good for debate formats having from one to three members per team, available at: [https://bearspace.baylor.edu/Richard\\_Edwards/www/TRPC\\_Software.html](https://bearspace.baylor.edu/Richard_Edwards/www/TRPC_Software.html).
  - Tournaman for PC, from the Berlin Debating Union, a very solid basic program for the four-team World Universities Debate Championship format, available at: <http://tournaman.wikidot.com/>.
2. Ask them to report on successes and challenges in this simulation.

### Caution:

**Never** use a tabulation program at a tournament unless you have learned how to use it by running an imaginary tournament.



## **WORLD UNIVERSITIES DEBATE CHAMPIONSHIP FORMAT EXERCISES**

This format, usually called “WUDC,” “Worlds,” or even “BP” (British Parliamentary), is the most popular debate format in the world, and it is the one that the vast majority of universities use because:

- It is very easy to learn.
- It has a very high “ceiling”—in other words it is very challenging to do very, very well.
- It puts eight debaters in one room for a debate.
- It is dynamic and audiences really seem to appreciate it.
- It is the standard format for international competition at the university level.

For a very brief explanation, see [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Berlin%20Briefing%203%20-%20The%20British%20Parliamentary%20Format%20\(for%20Novices\).pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Berlin%20Briefing%203%20-%20The%20British%20Parliamentary%20Format%20(for%20Novices).pdf)

Here are some exercises specific to this format.

### **WUDC—Second Team Drills**

#### **Goals:**

- Help debaters to think creatively about a wide variety of arguments during preparation.
- Help debaters adapt to the argumentative choices of a first team.
- Help debaters understand that the second team in a WUDC debate must advance the argumentation, not just repeat the same points.

**Procedure:**

1. Divide the debaters into teams of two. Give each team a topic and side from the Second Team Drills sheet at [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/second\\_team\\_drills.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/second_team_drills.pdf). Do not tell them that they will be second teams, and do not give them the arguments at this point.
2. Give the teams 10 minutes to prepare a list of at least five or six major arguments for their side of the topic.
3. Announce that they are the second teams and must adapt their arguments to what the first team has presented. Give each team the arguments associated with their topic on the Second Team Drills sheet.
4. Give them 5 minutes to prepare their new arguments.
5. If the group is small, have them give a 5-minute speech in which they present the new argument(s). If the group is large, have them present what their new argument(s) will be in an abbreviated form.
6. Engage the group in analysis and criticism of the choices they have made and whether these choices would win them the debate.

**Cautions:**

- Make sure that the arguments they furnish are either new or substantially advance the debate.
- Watch the time to make sure everyone gets a chance to share his or her choices.
- If debaters cannot critically analyze the choices made, do so yourself.

## **WUDC: Surprise with Topics**

### **Goals:**

- Help debaters anticipate unusual moves by affirmative/proposition teams.
- Help debaters adjust quickly to new situations during the debate.
- Help debaters learn to see different potential approaches to topics/motions.

### **Procedure:**

1. Divide debaters into 2-person teams.
2. Give each team a topic from Surprise with Motions sheet at [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/surprise\\_with\\_motions.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/surprise_with_motions.pdf).
3. Give them 10 minutes to work out a first negative/opposition strategy to the motion.
4. Make sure debaters write their strategies in their training manual notebooks.
5. Reveal to them the “surprise” (from the sheet) that the first affirmative/proposition team has unveiled as their strategy.
6. Give each team 5 minutes to regroup and decide what their major arguments as first negative/opposition will be. They may not dispute the definition.
7. Have each team present their new strategy. Encourage comment and criticism from others as well as reflections on other options they might have chosen.

**Cautions:**

- Do not tell them that this exercise is called “surprise.”
- Do not allow the teams to frame major definitional disputes—require them to adapt to the surprise.
- Encourage other teams to make suggestions and feel free to do so yourself.
- Watch your time to make sure all get a chance to participate.

**WUDC: Second Team Videos****Goals:**

- Help debaters improve by making them debate against excellent teams.
- Help debaters develop skills at advancing the debate as a second team.
- Allow them to see how other teams would have performed in their place.

**Procedure:**

1. You will need computer access for this exercise.
2. Divide debaters into two 2-person teams. One team will be the second affirmative/proposition and the other the second negative/opposition. If you have more than four debaters, situate them as two similar teams in other room so each team can work independently. Make sure all rooms have a computer and access to the Internet.
3. Have them prepare for the motion used in one of the following debates:

This House would show the full horrors of war: <http://debatevideoblog.blogspot.com/2010/01/debate-wudc-finals-from-koc-worlds-2010.html>.

This House would invade Zimbabwe: <http://debatevideoblog.blogspot.com/2011/01/debate-wudc-invade-zimbabwe-wudc-2012.html>.

This House would pay reparations for slavery: <http://debatevideoblog.blogspot.com/2011/02/debate-wudc-reparations-for-slavery.html>.

Or other excellent debates you find online, including those at <http://debate.uvm.edu/wudcvideo.html>).

4. Have the two teams watch the first half of the debate. They can take notes and work on their arguments; obviously, they can't offer points of information.
5. After the first four speeches stop the video and have the two teams join the debate as both second teams.
6. After the debate, have the teams watch what the second two teams did in the actual debate, taking notes and noticing differences.
7. Have the debaters discuss their choices and their speeches versus those in the actual debate.

**Cautions:**

- This exercise will take longer than the usual hour and may take up to two hours.
- Use this exercise with more experienced debaters because they will have to critique themselves.
- Make sure that the Internet connection and the laptops work well. Consider downloading the original video.

## **WUDC: Refutation Against Superstars**

### **Goals:**

- Help debaters learn various methods of refutation.
- Help debaters refine the timing of the refutation sections of speeches.
- Help debaters gain experience refuting very good teams.

### **Procedure:**

1. Debaters will speak as individuals in this exercise.
2. Give the debaters a motion from one of the following debates and have them think of major affirmative/proposition arguments and how they would refute them.

This House would show the full horrors of war: <http://debatevideoblog.blogspot.com/2010/01/debate-wudc-finals-from-koc-worlds-2010.html>.

This House would invade Zimbabwe: <http://debatevideoblog.blogspot.com/2011/01/debate-wudc-invade-zimbabwe-wudc-2012.html>.

This House would pay reparations for slavery: <http://debatevideoblog.blogspot.com/2011/02/debate-wudc-reparations-for-slavery.html>.

Or other excellent debates you find online, including those at <http://debate.uvm.edu/wudcvideo.html>.

3. Have all debaters take notes on all speeches in their training manual notebook.
4. Have the debaters watch the first affirmative/proposition speech from a video of the debate.

5. Have each debater give a 3-minute speech in which he or she refutes the major points made by the team that was just heard.
6. After each speech have the speaker give a 2-minute talk about his or her strategy, such as points they handled and points they ignored, broader or narrower refutation, as well as choice of words.
7. After each debater has spoken, lead a discussion about which refutation was the best and why. Note the different tactics the speakers use.
8. If time allows, have the debaters give their refutation speech again with improvements.

**Cautions:**

- Tell the debaters NOT to copy ideas and techniques from previous speakers because this will decrease the benefit of the exercise.
- Keep track of time to make sure everyone can contribute.
- Intervene as necessary to indicate strategies you thought were best, but always listen to the ideas of the debaters.

## **Conclusion**

These training exercises are some of the most exciting events that take place in your organization. They help your members learn and build skills, but they also build interpersonal relationships, strengthen identification with the organization, and inculcate a will to succeed. After people engage in these exercises, they become far more powerful advocates and recruiters for your organization.

## Resources

Debate Motion Central. "Debate Motions from Around the World." <http://debatemotioncentral.blogspot.com/> and the older blog <http://debate.uvm.edu/debatemotioncentral/index.html>

English Subject Centre. "Imaginative Ways of Organising Debate and Discussion. Higher Education Academy. <http://www.english.heacademy.ac.uk/explore/resources/seminars/activities/debate.php>

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## CHAPTER 8

# Major Events

By now you have introduced your group to the community, attracted some people, held some early events, and done some basic training, so it is time to get down to the real work of spreading the skills and abilities that can help build a healthier civil society and democracy.

In this chapter, we discuss some major events you can hold that will provide significant services to your community and your membership. These events, which are more complex and demanding than those discussed earlier, will also set into motion the process of transmitting the skills in debating and public advocacy that should be the focus of your efforts. You should repeat these events over and over again because they represent the lifeblood of what you are trying to accomplish.

### **Public Events**

A public event is any event that demonstrates what you are doing and showcases the abilities of your members. These events are where you can be creative and adapt to the situation at hand. Instead of just plugging in one of the many types of events we will be looking at in this and have looked at in previous chapters, you might also want to craft an argument specific to your situation. Remember, each community

is unique and you should feel free to try out your own ideas, not just use these.

## **TYPES OF PUBLIC EVENTS**

We discussed some public events in Chapter 7, but there are other varieties (all less than 2 hours) as well.

- *Historical celebrations.* Pick a historical occasion that is important to your community. Have students give speeches about the occasion, perhaps with a prize attached or stage a debate set in that historical period, complete with costumes. You might present a combined event, featuring the reading of historical documents, a very short speech by a prominent person, poems about the event read by younger school children, and a very short mini-debate. You could mix several of these suggestions into a 60- or 90-minute program.
- *Issue information session.* Pick an important issue in your community and have your group present background information and answer audience questions. If possible, make the presentation multimedia—show a brief background video to keep people interested. You can invite representatives of other groups concerned about the topic, but only as members of the audience. Your group should give the presentation and answer questions. These events make your group an information resource for citizens.
- *Student versus teacher debate.* Use a very short format to debate a motion of interest to both, but reverse the perspectives. For example, have students argue in favor of more homework and teachers argue against it. Other debate topics might be longer school hours and calendars or merit pay for teachers. This has worked very well,

especially at the middle school level, in many places. Parents love to come to such events.

- *Candidates' debate.* Invite those running for office to participate in a debate. Use a real debate format and avoid the common “joint press conference” format that most candidate debates use. Make sure you have a moderator who can enforce order and adherence to the format. Allow candidates longer speech times to introduce and conclude, but otherwise keep speeches fairly short. You might have an 8–10-minute introductory speech by each candidate (depending on the number of candidates) and then keep other time slots to 2 or 3 minutes. Remember that the audience won't benefit from a boring event and will drift away. Have the speakers present their basic program in their introductory speeches. Then, ask them to comment on each other's stand on issues, allow short rebuttals, and always include questions from the audience before the concluding remarks. Try to maximize media exposure of the event.
- *Public forum.* Invite a few speakers to discuss an important issue and then ask the audience to speak as well. Keep the speeches short and make sure that your members are always there to offer thoughtful remarks if you don't have enough audience participants to fill the time.
- *Holiday celebration.* Have your members plan a public event to mark a holiday with short speeches, a mini-debate, invited public figures, and short remarks from other groups. You might want to include auditioned singing groups, a pot luck supper, and perhaps dancing in your celebration—but keep the emphasis on public speaking.
- *Sports pep rally.* Invite two local sports teams to come to a public event. Stage the event as a rally. Give a brief history

of the teams, introduce players, stage a debate on some issue related to the teams (e.g., most dreaded opponent, team A is better than team B, greatest player ever, great player X versus great player Y). Invite the teams to become partners with you on future activities.

There are countless other ideas, such as fund-raising events for worthy local charities, adult public speaking classes, holding events at residential facilities for the elderly, and debate marathons. Choose the ones that work best to further your goals and excite your members.

### **PUBLICITY SPECIFICS FOR PUBLIC EVENTS**

Although you should use all your normal communications networks (website, Facebook, Twitter, press releases, etc.), different types of events will require different types of promotion. In adapting, engage in a thought experiment about your community: Think to yourself, who would be interested in attending such an event? How can I reach those people? Don't forget to have group members bring their families and friends and to invite new people and members of the general community. Have complete information available at several locations. Put up posters in local shops and public spaces when possible.

### **STAGING SPECIFICS**

You can stage your event at a school, local meeting room, youth center, public meeting room, or other locations such as libraries, open public spaces, and coffeehouses. Think about how many people might attend and choose your space accordingly. Ultimately, however, you will probably have to use whatever space you can get donated. Remember that a venue that's a little too small is better than one that is way too

big; a crowd generates a positive environment for public communication. Consider finding a room controlled by another group who would be willing to offer snacks and drinks on a cash basis in exchange for using the space.

To determine how the space should be arranged, imagine yourself attending the event. A preliminary visit can solve many problems. Decide how to use what's there but also think about what you may need to bring. Your group should have a very simple, lightweight podium; if you don't have one, use a small table placed in front of the speaker. Determine the optimal location within the space for the speakers and audience. Make sure you have enough chairs. Consider the lighting, need for a sound system, and how people will move around inside of the space.

You will have to return the space to its original state when you leave, so sign up volunteers in advance for cleanup and moving furniture. Praise these people lavishly.

### **FOLLOW-UP SPECIFICS**

Remember, many of those attending a public event will be unfamiliar with your group, so have fliers about your group available as well as a sign-up sheet for attendees who want to receive information about future events. Every public event is a chance for you to recruit new members. Your normal publicity network will report on the event and perhaps even make a video available. Send brief thank you notes to those who helped. Thank those who took part in the event for the first time (or who work with you infrequently) and invite them to collaborate in the future. Central organizers should make a list of what needs improvement and archive the list for next time.

## **EVALUATION**

When possible, ask those involved to complete a simple online evaluation of the event. You can design a simple form by going to <http://www.emailmeform.com/> (you can use the same form for different events). Place it online and have the answers emailed to you. The evaluation will alert you to problems you may not be aware of and help fine-tune future events.

## **Training Workshops**

In many ways, training workshops are the body and soul of your group. You are training people how to debate, how to express themselves, how to speak in public, and how to think creatively and critically—and you are doing it all at once. These events help everyone, trainers and students, learn, develop, and form bonds with one another.

Training workshops can be extended, intense affairs, or they can be held regularly on a weeknight or once a month. Many groups have one or two major training programs a year; others offer them more frequently, while still others use both. Find out when people are willing to attend and use that as a guide for scheduling. Longer programs that run over a few days can provide a deeper experience, while shorter sessions spread out across time can provide a way for busy people to stay involved and improve at the same time.

## **TRAINERS AND STUDENTS**

Every debater needs more training. The nature of the training will depend on participants' level of experience, but often experienced and novice debaters can benefit from the interaction in the same training session. Since you want people to continue their involvement with your group, make sure



that new members feel welcome. Encourage their efforts and emphasize that they are learning and improving.

Trainers can also be a varied group. More experienced debaters can train less experienced to their mutual benefit. If you have a shortage of trainers, don't postpone your event. Use the best people you have. Invite trainers from other groups; share human resources with other groups when you can.

Often people come to training events to improve their training skills. Have them participate in the general training but also provide additional instruction on how to train. Then, give them limited responsibility in some basic sessions and watch them learn and grow. Your goal is to cultivate new human resources, enable people to improve their skills, and then have them become a part of your training system. Accept whatever anyone has to offer and find a way to use the skills they have.

## **RECRUITING AND PUBLICITY**

Recruiting and publicity depend on whether you are having an intensive training session over a few days or whether you are offering a regular training program scheduled for the same time and day over a longer period.

For an intensive session, publicity and recruitment must start well in advance, probably a few weeks or even a month before the event. People will need to make a commitment and set aside the time. Don't just publicize and invite people once, do so repeatedly over many weeks so that you can attract attendees. Contact all types of people and stress that all are welcome. If some people can come to only part of an extended training, welcome them. Remember, any involvement is better than none. Often those who say they will come for a short time enjoy it and stay on.

For shorter and more regular training, publicize the initial event but don't stop recruiting or publicizing once regular training sessions begin. Continue during months where they are taking place.

### **LENGTH**

An extended training may take place over several days, perhaps a weekend. Often people have difficulty giving up an entire weekend, so don't make the training sessions all-day affairs. Regular trainings should last no more than two hours. Optimally, sessions should be between 60 and 90 minutes.

### **SETTING**

The nice part about debate training is that all you need is a fairly quiet space. In Bangladesh, Serbia, and other locations, groups often hold training sessions under a tree. Any room or space will do. If it is not entirely private, some newer participants may be reluctant to speak, but far more often passersby will become interested in what you are doing and eventually join in. If you have more than 15 attendees, you may need to break into smaller groups for some types of instruction and thus need more space. Hold your regular training sessions in the same place if possible, so people develop the habit of coming to a set location.

### **SCHEDULE**

Regular trainings are obviously scheduled at regular times. However, longer training sessions can be scheduled for days when people have more time available. For example, you might schedule a series of training sessions on a Saturday or from Friday evening through Sunday morning. It is always

good to leave some weekend time for people to attend to other responsibilities or be with their families.

In scheduling extended training sessions, remember to have the event transition from basic to more challenging activities. Another popular option is to offer sessions on different subjects at the same time and let people choose which to attend. People tend to like training more when they feel that have a choice of what to learn and how to be involved.

For training that extends over a week, use what is known as the “academy” model, where each day involves a mix of all activities along with practice debates. For more information on this model of training, see a short video at [http://debateacademy.net/Debate\\_Academy/Academy\\_Model.html](http://debateacademy.net/Debate_Academy/Academy_Model.html).

### **MIX OF ACTIVITIES**

Regardless of your training schedule, make sure to mix activities. While you can include some lectures, they should not be too long and should be followed by an active session of drills and exercises where people can put the lecture material into practice. You might also include full practice debates.

Participants in regular training sessions often lose interest if all they do is practice debate, so include other activities, such as those suggested in Chapter 7, as well. Try to cover all of the basic skills: speaking, making arguments, refuting arguments, building cases, analyzing topics, points of information, and cross-examination as well as strategies and judging. You can also target areas where those attending need additional work. Repeating an exercise can be useful for learning, but don't repeat the same training exercise too often or people will become bored. Ask attendees to indicate which activities they liked best and use their feedback in future scheduling.

## **SOCIAL ASPECTS**

Remember that people are coming to your training both because of their interest in debate and to socialize. With that in mind, add a social component to your events, but make sure it is after training. Extended training over a weekend might feature a talent show, karaoke, dance, or just a social setting with background music in the evenings. Regular training sessions might end with the group adjourning to a coffee shop. Leaving time for people to make friends is important because friendships will keep people involved and increase their commitment to your group.

## **Early Debate Competitions**

Your earliest debate competitions will be your most important. If they go well, your group will grow and develop; if they don't, everything following becomes more difficult. Have competitions, call them "tournaments" if you wish, but keep them small and simple. If these succeed, you can stage more complex events later.

## **SAMPLE ONE-DAY EVENT**

These events are usually held on Saturday, when people have free time. Below are three options.

### **Three Full Debates, Short Day**

8:00–8:45—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

8:45—Welcome and briefing about procedures.

9:00—Round One: Teams are matched randomly against each other. Judges are assigned. They give oral decisions and return ballots to tabulation room.

- 11:00—Round Two: Teams are matched randomly (or based on the record in Round One). Same decision procedure.
- 13:00—Lunch break. Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.
- 14:30—Round Three: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.
- 16:30—Awards given to best teams and speakers, announcement of upcoming events.
- 17:00—Departures.

### **Four Full Debates, Long Day**

- 7:00–8:00—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.
- 8:00–8:15—Welcome and briefing about procedures.
- 8:30—Round One: Teams are matched randomly against each other. Judges are assigned. They give oral decisions and return ballots to tabulation room.
- 10:30—Round Two: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.
- 12:30—Lunch break. Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.
- 13:30—Round Three: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.
- 15:30—Final Round: Best teams debate before selected judges; others watch.
- 17:00—Awards given to best teams and speakers, announcement of upcoming events.
- 17:30—Departures.

## **Training and Competition for New Debaters, Long Day**

8:00–9:00—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

9:00—Welcome and briefing about procedures.

9:15—Lecture: Motion analysis and case building.

10:30—Exercise: Meet in small groups and build cases from motions.

12:00—Exercise: Pick one, perhaps the Point of Information drill.

13:00—Lunch break: Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.

14:00—Round One: Teams are matched randomly against each other. Judges are assigned. They give oral decisions and return ballots to tabulation room.

15:30—Round Two: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

17:30—Awards to best teams and speakers, announcement of upcoming events.

18:00—Departures.

You can adjust or change these schedules as necessary. Adjust the start and stop times to conform to your local norms. If people leave the site for lunch, you will need to add time to the schedule. The schedules show two full hours for a debate, which may not be necessary. In any case, try to build some time into the schedule so the event doesn't run late. Remember, people expect to leave at a certain time, and the event should meet that expectation.

### **SAMPLE TWO-DAY EVENT**

A two-day event should run over the entire period. Remember that people have other lives and other commitments. If

your event is convenient and not too exhausting, people will be enthusiastic about coming again.

Here, a suggested schedule for this event.

### **Sample Two-Day Event**

#### **Friday–Saturday Full Tournament, Short Days**

##### *Friday*

17:00–18:00—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

18:00—Welcome and briefing about procedures.

18:30—Round One: Teams are matched randomly against each other. Judges are assigned. They give oral decisions and return ballot to tabulation room.

20:30—Departures for the evening.

##### *Saturday*

8:00—Arrival, registration, coffee if possible.

9:00—Round Two: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

11:00—Round Three: Same.

13:00—Lunch break: Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.

14:00—Round Four: Same.

16:00—Final Round: Best teams debate before selected judges, others watch.

17:30—Awards to best teams and speakers; announcement of upcoming events.

18:00—Departures.

Adjust the schedule as you see fit. You can keep the tournament on schedule more easily if you have volunteers collect

the ballots from the judges, if the debating rooms are close to the central meeting point, and if you can keep debaters on site for lunch.

### **EXTENDED EVENT**

Instead of having weekend competitions, you could hold one tournament that runs over number of weeks and ends with a public debate. This model has been used with much success in both Australia and Chile.

The tournament would involve scheduling a weekly debate. Each week, two teams who were assigned to debate each other with an assigned judge or judges would debate at a certain time, usually on a weekday evening. Groups such as schools and debate clubs with more than one team could begin by debating the other team(s) from their group. Decisions are filed with the organizers. These debates go on for many weeks, with wins and losses building up. As teams defeat other teams from their own club, they move on to debate the best teams from other groups. Eventually, teams with the best record go on to elimination debates (quarterfinal, semifinal, final). The grand final determines the championship. Often this is an elaborately staged event, with a crowd made up of the public and all the debaters in the tournament.

This format offers both benefits and challenges. On the one hand, the competition is easy to organize because contestants find their own spaces, dates, and times to compete. On the other hand, keeping track of participants is more difficult because of the extended time frame. Also some teams will change personnel or suddenly not be available that week, and judges and teams may not meet at the correct times or in the correct numbers. These sorts of problems are fairly unavoidable, but as long as you keep on debating, the event can be a success.



## **PLANNING AND STAGING**

Planning for a tournament needs to start many weeks in advance because you must complete several critical tasks before you send out invitations to your tournament. You will need to:

- *Locate a venue.* The site must have rooms for debates as well as bathrooms, a central room for general meetings, access to a copier, etc. The number of rooms available will set the upper limit for the number of teams who can attend. If you need four or more rooms, schools are usually the best place to host debate tournaments. Remember that you are responsible for cleaning up all space used after the event. If a facility is donated, make sure to advertise the group offering the space as a major sponsor of the event.
- *Set a date.* Set a date when both the facility you will use and the participants are available. For example, scheduling a tournament for students just before exams can be a bad idea, as is holding it on a date when many people will be on vacation. Your event should not conflict with other debate tournaments in your region, so coordinate with other groups before finalizing the date.
- *Arrange for housing.* If you are planning on a long tournament with participants from outside your immediate area, you might want to arrange for housing. This can involve arranging home stays hosted by your supporters and/or negotiating a good rate for rooms at a local hotel, hostel, or dormitory. Have those staying in these facilities make their own reservations and pay their bills directly to the hotel. This will reduce your administrative burden.
- *Determine whether you will charge entrance fees.* High entry fees can discourage participation, so keep fees as low as possible, particularly if your tournament involves a large

percentage of new debaters. Remember, a tournament is not a profit-making activity. Often fees are a little higher than expenses so they can be waived for teams attending their first tournament. Attendees need to feel that they are getting something for their fees, so offer coffee, snacks, lunch, and/or awards.

- *Decide on what awards you will present and order them early.* You can buy awards for very modest sums if you check online and order in advance. Avoid ordering too many awards, since you don't know far enough in advance how many teams will actually attend. If you are not sure what number to order, don't have a year engraved on the awards so you can use them for the next contest. Many tournaments use certificates as awards; the organizers purchase certificate paper and print documents specially designed for the tournament. This low-cost solution has the added benefit of being able to feature the name of the winners on the certificate. Some events provide participation certificates for all attending.
- *Determine whether you will provide food.* Refreshment options include: food provided at the tournament or a meal ticket to a nearby eatery (both paid for by entry fees); food provided on a cash basis on site arranged by either you or a caterer; or the use of an existing facility (such as a cafeteria) at the site (usually a school). Remember that any time food is available on site, the need for cleanup increases.
- *Plan your publicity campaign.* Utilize your standard communication network to publicize your tournament, but also determine what other groups you want to participate in the event and target them as well. List a training session before the event to help people prepare and determine

if they actually want to participate in the event. Debate tournaments should be public events, so invite spectators, parents, friends, and others. Make sure to indicate in all publicity that the debates will be taking place over the course of the day and people can come whenever they wish. Alert the media about the event.

After you have dealt with all these matters, you can draft, review, and then send out your invitations.

The day before the event, walk through the site to make sure it is in order. Inspect all rooms you will be using and check that they are clearly marked. Check the large meeting room to ensure that the public address system is working and that any media equipment requested is or will be in place. Make sure that the room you will use to collect and tabulate results is centrally located and big enough; inspect the bathroom facilities to make sure they are fully stocked.

Put yourself in the place of a participant. Imagine you are coming to the site for the first time; wander in and see if you can determine where to go. Stand in the meeting room and envision it during welcome and announcements. Go from there to a room where a debate will be held, especially the room that is the farthest from the meeting room. Imagine the participants using the bathrooms at the same time (half before a debate and half after a debate). Imagine where people will congregate between debates. Actively imagining the tournament in this way will help you anticipate and solve problems.

### **JUDGE AND PARTICIPANT MIX**

A tournament involves both debaters and judges. Too often organizers are so excited to be adding more teams that they don't immediately realize that they don't have enough judges. More experienced members of your group can serve as judges, but you may need to ask attending teams to bring

judges. Often groups are asked to bring judges in proportion to the number of teams they will enter. For example, at World Universities Debate Championship (WUDC) format tournaments, the standard is often N-1 (one fewer judge than the number of teams). For formats with only two teams in each room, you might require one judge for every two teams. If groups can't bring judges and you can't supply them, don't let their teams enter.

In many cases, judges may not yet be qualified, so send a training packet to all judges attending or schedule a training session before the first round. Sometimes tournaments make a debate available as an online video and ask judges to view it and render a decision. This can be useful but, before requiring this, be aware that it may be a substantial barrier to entry. You don't want to turn people away because they didn't take an online judging test. If judges are very inexperienced, you can assign them to accompany a more experienced judge who can advise them on proper procedures as well as report back on when they are ready to judge on their own.

### **LONG CRITIQUE AND FEEDBACK PERIODS**

Make sure that the schedule includes time for judges to explain their decisions. The explanation is part of an educational experience, and debaters learn most when receiving feedback about their performance. Encourage judges to discuss their decisions openly and in detail. Some contestants will be unhappy with the decision. This is inevitable at debate tournaments. The more feedback judges can give, the more comfortable those losing will be with the decision because they better understand its basis.

## **TABULATION, RECOGNITION, AND AWARDS**

Debate tournaments produce wins, losses, and quality rating points for speakers and teams. All these need to be tabulated properly and then used to produce the next rounds' matches. While very small events can be tabulated by hand with nothing more than a calculator, any tournament of even modest size should use tabulation software, which can be found at <http://debate.uvm.edu/software.html>.

You might consider using different software packages based on the debate format you're using. If it is one team against one team (with 1, 2, or 3 speakers), you might consider TRPC software, proven to be effective all over the world. If you are using the two teams against two teams format (WUDC or British Parliamentary), then Tournaman might be best for you. Both are fairly simple and come with manuals. Remember to do a test run before your event. Hold a mock tournament using the program with imaginary teams, judges, and results so that you can see how the program works and anticipate difficulties. You will need a PC laptop and a printer to use any of these programs.

Recognition and awards take place at the assembly held at the conclusion of the tournament. Keep the meeting short and to the point, since everyone has done a lot of talking and listening already. Avoid long speeches and guest speakers. Recognitions should include thanking sponsors, hosts, and organizers. Awards should involve announcing those teams and individual debaters who did best and presenting trophies, certificates, or small gifts if you are using them. Announce names with pride and vigor, and ask people to come forward. Have them pose for photos.

Following the closing assembly, begin working on future events. Remind everyone of the next activities and how they can get involved. Obviously, you will have had information about your group and their activities available throughout

the tournament. Make sure that all attendees give you their email address and other contact information so you can stay in touch with them.

### **EVALUATION**

Take some time after a tournament to consider the good and bad parts of the event. Discuss major shortcomings, determine their causes, and then think about how you can improve. Make sure to have these notes available as you plan the next event.

### **POST-EVENT PUBLICITY**

One of the most effective forms of post-event publicity is publishing the results. While the media might be more interested in the top levels of performance, those who attended will appreciate seeing the complete tabulated results. These will show the performance of each team and speaker in each debate. The tabulation programs suggested above produce either webpages or pdf documents. Post photos and videos from the tournament to your website. Twitter when the stories go live online. Update your Facebook pages with links to the full stories. Make sure to provide the media with a complete story, including pictures of the happy winners holding their awards.

In your post-event publicity, remember to thank hosts, service providers, individuals who provided special assistance, and especially those who helped clean up the site. These kinds of small actions create huge good will.

## Later and Larger Debate Tournaments

Once your program is firmly established and your debaters have experience, you may want to stage a larger tournament that welcomes teams from other cities, regions, and even countries. While such an event may be more difficult to stage, you also may be able to access greater resources. Because the event is large, it may be easier to obtain sponsors. This has proved to be true in countless national and regional championships, enabling ambitious debate organizers to take on these larger events.

A larger event means everything is larger: you will need a bigger venue and more ballots, food, and housing. Budgeting, accounting, collecting registration fees, and arranging social events will be more complex. To handle a large event efficiently, you need to recruit more people and subdivide tasks among volunteers. Maintaining communication among the organizers and volunteers is critical.

All of the advice from the previous section on smaller debate tournaments also applies here, but even more so. Make sure you are familiar with that section before attempting to stage a larger event. As you step up to a larger event, *How to Organize an International Tournament: A Brief Guide* by Ana Garau and Zsófia Muranyi ([http://idebate.org/sites/live/files/HT%20Organize%20A%20Debate%20Tournament\\_final.pdf](http://idebate.org/sites/live/files/HT%20Organize%20A%20Debate%20Tournament_final.pdf)) will prove useful.

### **PLANNING, PUBLICITY, STAGING**

Planning a major event involves a longer time frame. Many large tournaments are scheduled and planned six months to a year in advance. Arrangements for facilities, food, and housing have to be made early in the planning to ensure availability and to take advantage of possible discounts for acting early. To make the process of planning easier, you might hold

an annual event on roughly the same dates so that planning becomes predictable.

Publicity should be extensive, of course; and, since you have a longer lead time, you can enlist your members to begin spreading the word within their social networks, both offline and online, long before you generate formal publicity materials. Ask if you can announce your tournament in any other meetings you attend. Just creating the awareness that “a big debate tournament is coming up” can be helpful as the event nears. Media outlets are not likely to report on your event until just before it takes place. Nevertheless, make sure it is on their calendars so that when they are looking for a story later they will see it. Contact radio and television stations at least several weeks in advance and offer to help them cover the event.

Hosting a large tournament requires a lot of attention to detail. After you choose your site, get a written contract from the venue owner that includes a detailed list of agreed-on fees. Make sure to reserve the site not only for the tournament but also for the time needed to set up and clean up. Get the phone numbers of the people who have keys in case spaces need to be opened. Make sure you have adequate trash cans and trash bags; extra toilet paper and towels in bathrooms; spare ink cartridges for the printer in the tabulation room; and the use of audiovisual equipment to show the draw for the debates as well as the topics if appropriate for the format you are using. You might want to set up a small music system or video projector in a main room if people will be waiting there. Supervise food provision so that the first few people don't take too much food and you run out later. Restock soda and snack machines before the event. You will need a mobile phone directory of all who will be working on the event to hand out to those same people. Ballot collection efforts become more important and may involve additional volunteers



Staging will involve the same walk-through of the space and schedule as a smaller event, but the process will take longer because you have more elements to consider. When you plan a large tournament, leave hope for perfection behind. During the event, it can be comforting to realize that you are dealing with little things that are going wrong because that means that big things are not.

### **DEBATER AND JUDGE ORIENTATION**

A larger event is likely to attract more experienced debaters who need less training and preparation before the tournament. However, this also means that the small number of less experienced debaters face a gap between their abilities and those of their competitors, so offer training in the weeks leading up to the event. If some teams become discouraged early in the tournament because of their performance and/or competitive results, remind them that in later debates at the same tournament they will meet competitors with similar records and that they are welcome to attend future trainings.

To determine judges' experience, ask them to fill out an online evaluation form in which they include any life experience that might be relevant (lawyer, judge, teacher, community volunteer) and to indicate if they have any experience debating in general and using the format you have chosen. Analyzing these can help you use judges properly as well as determine what kind of training, if any, you need to offer. If necessary, schedule a long training session before the tournament begins. Early in the tournament, pair new judges with more experienced ones as a kind of apprenticeship that can lead to them eventually judging on their own.

## **PRELIMINARY DEBATES**

Preliminary debates are fairly straightforward. In the first round (or sometimes in the first two rounds), teams are scheduled randomly. After that, they are scheduled based on their results. This process is called “power pairing.” As the tournament progresses, the process becomes more refined as teams with similar records debate each other. This makes each debate a closer, more engaging contest and ensures that teams do not reach the elimination rounds because they had a weak schedule. The tabulation programs pair teams automatically with some constraints that tournament managers can select. Usually organizers attempt to have a balance of positions or sides during the tournament—teams debate for or against the topic the same number of times, for example. In most cases, judges do not judge their own team or group, and, in some formats, teams from the same organization don’t debate each other.

## **DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE LEVELS**

In some cases, debates are organized by experience level. Thus, a tournament might have novice and varsity or “open” (any experience level) divisions. This type of organization has both pluses and minuses. Those in favor of this format maintain that it helps to ensure that novices will not become discouraged debating against more experienced debaters. Those who oppose this format point out that novices can learn from debating against the more experienced debaters and that power pairing will match teams up based on performance as the tournament goes on. Decide which type of organization best serves your goal, but remember that one large division is easier to schedule, tabulate, and administer than several smaller ones. If you learn which teams are

“novice,” you could arrange to have a strictly novice final round to recognize them.

### **ELIMINATION ROUNDS**

After preliminary debates, the teams “break” into the elimination rounds, such as quarterfinals, semifinals, and finals. The number of teams you allow to break will depend on the number at the tournament, your schedule, and the level of difficulty you want to impose for teams to earn the right to “break.” If you hold a tournament with 60 teams, a break at 16 is far easier than one at 8. The level of challenge you want for teams to earn the “break” is a part of your tournament design. The elimination round debates need to be sequenced properly—based on the order in which teams finished the preliminary debates. Those who did better during the preliminary debates have earned the right to face weaker teams in the elimination debates. Thus, the number one team will debate the last team to break in most instances. Brackets for appropriate levels are available in Appendix 3.

### **Sample Two-Day Event**

#### **Saturday–Sunday Full Tournament, Medium Days**

##### *Saturday*

7:00–8:00—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

8:00–8:15—Welcome and briefing about procedures.

8:30—Round One: Teams are matched randomly against each other. Judges are assigned. They give oral decisions and return ballot to tabulation room.

10:30—Round Two: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

12:30—Lunch break: Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.

13:30—Round Three: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

15:30—Round Four: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

17:30—Departures.

### *Sunday*

8:00–9:00—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

9:00—Round Five: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

11:00—Round Six: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

13:00—Lunch break: Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.

14:00—Semifinals: Best teams debate before selected judges; others watch.

16:00—Finals: Best teams debate before selected judges; others watch.

17:30—Awards to best teams and speakers, announcement of upcoming events.

18:00—Departures.

### **Saturday–Sunday Full Tournament, Long Days**

#### *Saturday*

7:00—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

8:00—Welcome and briefing about procedures.

8:30—Round One: Teams are matched randomly against each other. Judges are assigned. They

give oral decisions and return ballot to tabulation room.

11:00—Round Two: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

13:00—Lunch break: Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.

14:00—Round Three: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

16:00—Round Four: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

18:00—Round Five: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

### *Sunday*

7:30—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

8:00—Disqualification of absent teams.

8:30—Round Six: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

10:30—Quarterfinalists announced.

10:45—Quarterfinals: Best teams debate before selected judges; others watch

13:00—Lunch break: Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.

14:00—Semifinals: Best teams debate before selected judges; others watch.

16:00—Finals: Best teams debate before selected judges; others watch.

17:30—Awards to best teams and speakers; announcement of upcoming events.

18:00—Departures.

### **SAMPLE THREE-DAY EVENT**

The three-day event is much like the two-day event, but has more preliminary debates and fewer elimination debates within the context of shorter days. Debate can be intellectually challenging as well as physically tiring, and if days are too long, some contestants might not find it enjoyable. You need to evaluate your participants as well as determine the costs of adding an extra day when you determine whether to use a two- or three-day schedule.

#### Sample Three-Day Event

##### *Friday*

17:00–18:00—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

18:00—Welcome and briefing about procedures.

18:30—Round One: Teams are matched randomly against each other. Judges are assigned. They give oral decisions and return ballot to tabulation room.

20:00—Round Two: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

22:00—Departures.

##### *Saturday*

8:00—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

9:00—Round Three: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

11:00—Round Four: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

13:00—Lunch break: Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.

14:00—Round Five: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

16:00—Round Six: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

18:00—Departures.

### *Sunday*

8:00—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

8:30—Round Seven: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

10:30—Round Eight: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

12:30—Lunch break: Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.

13:30—Semifinals: Best teams debate before selected judges; others watch.

15:30—Finals: Best teams debate before selected judges; others watch.

17:00—Awards to best teams and speakers; announcement of upcoming events.

18:00—Departures.

You can adjust this schedule as desired. You might add more elimination debates and have fewer preliminary events. You might replace a debate with judge and debater training.

### **RECOGNITION AND AWARDS**

At a larger event, you will have more people to thank, recognize, and give awards, and people will be a bit more tired and perhaps a bit more impatient. So, keep the recognition and awards ceremony as short as possible.

## **POST-EVENT PUBLICITY**

After a large-scale event, follow the publicity guidelines outlined above but also do a bit more. Create a photo album of the event (people love to see themselves, parents love to see students, friends love to see one another). Increase the number of debate videos you put online. Produce some videos with short comments by champions and top speakers. Remind the audience that your event is annual (if true) and urge them to mark the next event on their calendar.

## **Public Speaking Contest**

A public speaking contest can be an easy, fun, and meaningful event. It can get people excited about debating and it can also raise community awareness of your group and what you are doing. Such contests can become a regular event during a specific time of the year.

## **MATCH CONTEST WITH PURPOSE**

You can use public speaking events in countless ways, including to:

- promote public speaking in a community;
- prepare schoolchildren for future involvement in debating; increase publicity for your group in the community.

You can stage an event in cooperation with a sponsor and use a topic of interest to the sponsor. For example, you could host a speech contest with a sports club. The club would sponsor it and provide prizes, while videos of the winning speeches could be posted at the sports club's website.



## **CONTEST DESIGN**

A public speaking contest can be short or long, large or small. Here are some factors to consider when selecting a format:

- Host the contest for a specific audience (such as businesspersons, college students, or high school students).
- Choose a broad topic area for the speeches, one that is of interest to the group you are targeting.
- Keep speeches short; 4–7 minutes is optimal. Use shorter speeches for younger participants. Set time limits within a range (between X and Y minutes) to avoid judging based on meeting a specific time limit.
- Keep rules simple. Speeches should be within time limits; address the topic; be the work of the speaker; and involve no visual aids or props (to ensure speeches are comparable and avoid staging problems).

Your contest could have a large or a very targeted reach—or fall between these extremes. A very local contest could target a small group, such as a school or a neighborhood. If you have a small event, keep the format simple. Ask the speakers to give their speeches one after the other and then determine the winner or winners. If you have more than six speeches, you might hold a preliminary contest to determine who will be in the final. You might offer an inexpensive prize either from your group or from a sponsor.

If you host a larger contest with speakers from different schools, clubs, or neighborhoods, you could host preliminary events to select the best speakers at each individual location; the top one or two speakers then move on to the next level. A final event would determine overall winners. The final event might interest the media, so make a video. Sponsors may want to be featured at the final. An even larger event could

involve an entire region or nation. Speeches could be given at several different locations, ending up in a grand final for the region or the nation. Once again, this would be popular with sponsors and media.

As with many events, start small and grow over time. Staging a small event gives you experience and enables you to determine the organizational challenges and the rewards for your group. Also, sponsors may be more attracted by a larger contest that has grown from a smaller one.

### **PUBLICITY**

Focus your publicity efforts on the participating groups, potential speakers, and your target audience. Concentrate on potential speakers first or else you won't have a contest. Formal sponsorship by a school, community, or other group may help draw more participants. If you provide support, participation will increase. If necessary, offer basic public speaking training and post instruction and advice on your website. Don't forget your audience—family, friends, sponsors, those interested in the topic as well as others such as the elderly (who often love such events, especially if staged in a convenient location such as an assisted living facility or senior housing complex). If your event is school-based, make sure information goes out to all teachers and parents.

Publicize your event through your normal channels: press releases, your website, Facebook, and Twitter, as well as posters, word of mouth, and media packages. Offer to appear on a radio program to discuss the event. Give radio stations the opportunity to host part of the contest or else play sound clips of the speeches.

## **JUDGE TRAINING**

Judges can include members of your group, teachers, leading citizens, and others who you believe are persons of good will who will treat the event with respect. Supply each judge with a list of basic rules as well as judging criteria. A sample of a sheet provided by Toastmasters International can be found at <http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/InternationalSpeechJudgingCriteria.pdf>.

Have more than one judge for an event. Each judge can then rank (ordinal indication as in first, second, third) and score (a point scale indicating the quality of the speech) the speakers using a simple 5-point scale. The ranks and scores can be tabulated and then the speaker scoring higher being named the winner. If they are tied on ranks, then use the quality point scores to break that tie. Avoid a discussion over the winner and instead use the numbers.

## **STAGING**

Staging a speaking contest is fairly simple. You just need a room big enough to hold the participants, judges, and audience. You may or may not wish to have a podium, small table, or lectern. If you have a podium, hang a prepared sign about your group, the sponsor, or the contest on the front. Chairs should be available for the audience. Most classrooms will serve quite nicely for this purpose. Judges can sit together near the front. You may need an audio system if your audience is large.

Your program will include: welcome and orientation, introduction of the judges, introduction of the speakers, speeches, judges complete scoring sheets, results being tabulated, results announced, awards presented, and then farewell. While scores are being tabulated, you can talk to the audience about your group and its future events as well as how

they can get involved. Make sure to get contact information from all interested in your group and its activities.

### **RECOGNITION AND AWARDS**

Every participant should receive a certificate of participation with his or her name on it. These are easy to produce with almost any word processing program; make sure to use quality paper. Judges should also receive a certificate for their participation.

Awards can be of various types: certificates, trophies, products, gift certificates, or money. Remember, the contest is important, not the award—but award quality can increase contestant motivation.

### **EVALUATION**

Don't become discouraged if few people participate the first time. The costs are very low, administration is easy, and your event will grow over time. Have a discussion after the event with supporters, sponsors, and fellow organizers to identify areas that can be improved and to determine how to expand the contest. A public speaking contest should be a special event and probably would not sustain interest if held every week or every month, but it may work well if held at the same time each year.

### **Media Events**

We often think that media exposure is difficult and expensive. This is not necessarily so. Given the right situation, you can be assisting the media in doing their job while they assist you. Here are some simple examples of where you can gain media exposure.

## **RADIO PROGRAMS**

Many radio programs are searching for content. Bringing two or four debaters to a radio station to have a short debate about an important issue may be what local and smaller radio stations are looking for. You might even consider bringing a recorded debate. These types of events have been shown to be very successful when they are followed up by telephone calls from listeners. Many “talk radio” format stations and programs are looking for a way to get listeners to call in—staging a reasonably provocative short debate and then inviting calls is often just the right way to do that. Some debate groups have been able to negotiate regular appearances on smaller radio stations of exactly this type.

The key is to locate opportunities. Spend some time cruising up and down the radio dial to locate stations and programs that might be interested. Contact them and go from there.

## **TELEVISION**

Television programs can range from very large and national to very small and local. For example, for many years Slovenia had a weekly television program that had high school students debating important issues before a panel of judges. The program also had background information about the topic. After the short debate, the judges discussed their decision and, at the end of the show, the students mentioned what side they were personally on as opposed to what side they had represented in the debate. A series of debates led up to a final for the championship. (For a story about this program, see [http://debate.uvm.edu/debateblog/doctortuna/Blog2006/Entries/2006/10/11\\_WITH\\_THE\\_TEKMA\\_DEBATE\\_TV\\_SHOW\\_IN\\_THE\\_STUDIO.html](http://debate.uvm.edu/debateblog/doctortuna/Blog2006/Entries/2006/10/11_WITH_THE_TEKMA_DEBATE_TV_SHOW_IN_THE_STUDIO.html).) Kazakhstan also had a very popular national television program featuring debaters. No television program lasts forever, but these programs helped

propel debating in these nations into the forefront of public awareness.

Programs also can be small and local. Debaters can tape a short debate and then offer it on local cable networks, public access networks, or school video networks. These can be technologically basic affairs, with low-end cameras and editing all that is required. Programs can also be taped “straight through” to avoid editing. In the United States, these programs can be offered over public access television. Companies who have won the local cable television franchise cover the costs. One of these is Flashpoint, an issue-based discussion program at the University of Vermont that now has more than 440 episodes. (For more information, see <http://flashpointtv.blogspot.com/>.)

One of the advantages of such small and local programs is that they are easy to prepare and implement and, once institutionalized, are fairly easy to sustain. Your debaters gain valuable experience as well as community visibility. Flashpoint programs are popular in Vermont; the website that displays them for on-demand viewing usually logs many hundreds of views for each show. Such programs can be put online using inexpensive services such as <http://vimeo.com> and then displayed on your website.

The secret to gaining media opportunities is to be active in other areas and then look for ways to integrate media into your efforts. They want programming, your group has content, and so you need to find the right opportunity to connect the two.

## **PRESS CONFERENCES**

Many local community, business, and political groups would like to hold press conferences but are fearful of doing so for

lack of experience and expertise. Your group can solve their problem by providing support services.

If a group wants to hold a press conference, your organization can assist with publicity to gather the press and prepare those present to answer questions effectively. They can also introduce the issues before questions begin, serve as audience members to ask relevant questions, and assist in making a video of the event to place online.

These efforts benefit all involved. The group holding the press conference gains from it, but so can your group. You can ask for a small fee, support by that group for future projects, prizes for competitions, or even an endorsement for others interested in using your services.

For basic information about holding a press conference, see the Community Tool Box at <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest/press-conference/main>.

## **Internet Events**

You can easily integrate the Internet into your organization's program. You just have to determine what works best for you. I recommend three options:

1. Stream your events. Streaming involves setting up video and audio feeds through almost any laptop computer, sending it to a free server, and then allowing viewers with an Internet connection to watch the event live. Just let your viewing population know when the event will take place (watch out for confusion about time zones) and give them a web address to watch from, and you are ready.

The technology is very simple and easy to use. Anyone who can use a laptop can be streaming in 15 minutes. Many companies provide video streaming services, but

UStream (<http://www.ustream.tv/new>) is the best, and it's free. It also allows viewers to use text chat and pose questions while watching.

Don't be discouraged if only a small number of people view the event online. As you offer more and more events, audiences will grow. By the way, this is a wonderful means of enabling parents to watch their children perform.

2. Host a simultaneous event. A simultaneous event offers live streams from different locations. Thus, one debate team could be in China and another in Europe and they could debate each other live, with the ability to see and hear each other as well as allow others to watch. Judges can be in still other locations. These technologies are a bit more complicated, but you don't have to be a techie to use them. Internet telephone and video provider Skype provides conference sessions for up to 25 participants at low cost, see <http://www.skype.com/en/features/group-calls/>. Other services include Gotomeeting at <http://www.gotomeeting.com/fec/>.

While these events are exciting, they also present some challenges. You have to coordinate time zones and stage your event at a time appropriate for an audience the can span countries and continents. You have to make sure all technical matters have been successfully dealt with or the entire event will crash.

3. Organize a sequenced debate. This event utilizes the power of the Internet most fully. In this event, your members debate with others over long distances without encountering the problems associated with a simultaneous event. For example, Team A gives their speech to a laptop video camera in Slovenia. The speech is then uploaded to a video website such as <http://vimeo.com> or <http://youtube.com>. Then, team B in Chile watches that speech online. They



have one day to draft an opposing speech, deliver it into a camera and upload it. These video speeches volley back and forth until the debate is concluded. A judge or judges then watch the entire debate and determine the winner, announcing the decision to a video camera. The complete debate is then released to the general public.

Staging such a debate is relatively easy and involves almost no cost. It erases the tyranny of distance and allows all debaters to become global debaters. This technique has been tried successfully but has yet to be used for a major international debate tournament—but that is probably coming soon.

## **Conclusion**

When determining what to stage, you have a choice of many event formats. Your challenge is to pick those that meet your broader goals and advance your organization. Experiment with them, repeat them if justified, improve them, and then look for ways to incorporate other events into your program. If you maintain a narrow vision of “we debate each other,” your community will not reap the benefits of the amazing skills your members develop. Your goal should be to empower individuals to make a difference in civil society. All of these events promote this goal.

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## CHAPTER 9

# Expansion

When your program has matured and become fairly large, when you are serving a lot of people in many important ways, you can think of expanding. This chapter will explain how you can grow. Just as important, it will help you determine when and if you should grow.

### **Focus on Your Base**

A service group such as yours is not a multinational corporation or an aggressive empire. Expansion should be done when appropriate and in ways that advance your original mission. Bigger is not always better, and issues of quality need to be considered along with issues of size.

As you expand, remember to do so strategically, in a way that strengthens your organization and furthers your goals.

- *Avoid expansion that draws attention and support away from your base of members and supporters and your mission.* New efforts can be attractive simply because they are new. Their novelty could draw attention away from tried-and-true activities that keep renewing your base. If you take resources away from attracting and training new members,

for example, you will weaken your organization. Likewise, some new opportunities may provide attractions (such as travel) that are not essential to your basic mission. As you expand, make sure your current activities do not suffer.

- *Make expansion serve your base.* Look to partnerships with similar groups nearby; these can result in a productive exchange of ideas and the development of personal contacts that can promote your mission. Opportunities for debating far away may add to the excitement about your program if those opportunities are given to those who have done the most back home. Extra resources from a sponsorship or a grant can be used for further training or to increase the level of comfort and luxury that exists at current events you hold.
- *Don't sacrifice depth for breadth.* Expanding the breadth of your program at the expense of its depth is not a good trade-off. Your goal is to reach many people in the hope of promoting a civil society. Efforts that help fewer people in more exciting ways may well not promote this goal.

Always think about how expansion can be used to fulfill your mission and you will avoid the dangers of growing in the wrong ways.

## **Identifying Expansion Opportunities**

Many expansion opportunities will arise from your normal activities and thus provide a natural path to productive expansion. You can:

- *Expand into nearby similar situations.* If you are organizing activities in a town, consider expanding your activities into a nearby community. If you have debating programs

at a few schools, you might want to add new schools in a neighboring town. This type of expansion can have significant benefits for your organization, providing an influx of ideas and human resources.

When you expand, create partners, not subsidiaries. New groups are more likely to be a vibrant force for debate if they are independent rather than a branch of your organization. Remember, your goal is not to control debate in your area but to promote activities that breed a true civil society. This is best done through grassroots development and growth as opposed to top-down direction from a distant administrative center.

- *Expand to new populations.* Extend existing activities to new populations. If you are serving schoolchildren, for example, consider expanding to adults. If you work with businesses, consider activities that will attract groups from nongovernmental organizations. Of course, if you expand to new populations, you may need to consider new activities. Different populations will have different needs and interests, different people will find different opportunities, and all of these can enhance not only your operations but the way in which you use debate to help create a more civil society. Remember, “Everyone you will ever meet knows something you don’t.”

## **Using Core Organizers**

As your program develops and matures so will the people in it. Your core organizers will have developed new skills and a deeper understanding of the potential of debate. They will be motivated to expand your organization, so find productive roles for them. Encourage them to take on more responsibility in ways that further your goals. You might want to encourage

them to explore organizing new events, for example. Very few of these events require additional funding, so when human resources are available to hold them, it's a good idea to do so.

## **Training Multipliers**

One exciting way you can expand while furthering your goals is to develop trainers. They become agents of expansion; they tell your story and excite people about debate even after they leave your group. One dean at a leading South American university has referred to this process as involving the “debate virus”—the word about the benefits of debate spreads as people move around.

Identify individuals who might be interested in becoming trainers and provide them with specific guidance. Don't focus on the stars of your program and dispel the myth that only elite debaters can be trainers. After a basic introduction to debating, most people can help new debaters in some way. Use that power and you will increase the reach of your organization. Adopt the slogan “Each one teach one.” When we all share what we know, we get superior results. Remember, there is not “one right way” to debate.

To encourage your debaters to become trainers, distribute training materials for them to examine. When you use peer training, give feedback not just to the newer debaters, but also to those peers who are helping them learn. Give those who are training the freedom to train as they wish. After all, just like there's more than one way to debate, so, too, there's more than one way to train. Finally, train in groups so that trainees can learn from one another. Hold training sessions in which experienced trainers share some of their most successful techniques.

Developing training materials is one of the most valuable undertakings for your organization. Such materials ensure that training will not be hit or miss or dependent on the goodwill of your skilled debaters. It also ensures that training will be consistent across generations of debaters. Collect training materials and see which ones work for you. Create your own basic training manual, customized for your group, and make it available online for trainers and members alike. Many training guides are available online, including those produced by USA National Debate Coaches Association (<http://www.debatecoaches.org/resources/curriculum-resources/>) and the Lawrence Debate Union at the University of Vermont (<http://debate.uvm.edu/debateblog/LDU/Learn.html>). (For additional resources, see Appendix 2). You can link these to your website as well.

## **Expansion Based on Successful Publicity and Networking**

Publicity and networking take word of your activities to new places. New people will notice what you are doing and might be interested in developing similar activities. Promote your organization to clubs, schools, and other groups. Use your website to educate people about the opportunities debate offers. Include contact information in all your publicity pieces.

Whenever you expand, you need to remember that you must literally start over and repeat many of the publicity and networking efforts you engaged in when you were first establishing your group. You will have to train new people in how to develop a program and continually monitor whether what you have done in the past is working in your new situation. Working with new groups in new areas does not have to be a simple replay of something you have already done. Perhaps

in this unique new situation something different, and perhaps bigger and better, can be considered.

## **Expansion Based on Partnerships and Support**

You can never have too many partners or supporters. You may have some partners now, but to expand you probably need more. Reach out to your existing partners to see if they can help, but also look for new partnerships. Take whatever help is offered and determine how you can use it not only to further your goals but also to benefit your partner. A relationship that is mutually beneficial will grow over time. A club that asks you to provide public speaking training for them may become a group willing to let you use their space for an event. A school you have helped with a speech contest may want to start a debating program and/or recommend you to other schools. All of these groups might become sponsors of future competitions, tournaments, and perhaps trips to other competitions.

Also cultivate new supporters, those who may not be able to work with you but who bear you goodwill. As people become aware of your good work, you build up a reputation and goodwill that can often pay off in the most unpredictable ways. A student may win a contest and a parent may suggest to a local youth agency on whose board she sits that you should do training at youth centers. A business owner may have seen a debate and decide to invite you to make a presentation about your activities at a Rotary Club luncheon. A citizen may attend one of your events and then suggest to a friend who works for a radio station that you might have some interesting programming to offer. Everyone you have contact with can become an agent of expansion.



To increase your ability to work with both partners and supporters, you need to “tell everyone to tell everyone.” Much is made of the impact of online media and social networks, but in-person influence can be even more effective. Political scientist Robert Bond and his fellow researchers (2012) found that personal influence might be four times greater than online influence between friends. ([http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/bond\\_etal\\_2012%2261millionpersoninfluenceexperiment.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/bond_etal_2012%2261millionpersoninfluenceexperiment.pdf))

## **Provide Services Without Early Demands**

One way to connect to potential partners and supporters is through a tested influence approach called “pre-giving.” You do something for someone else and then she feels obligated to do something for you. Pre-giving can be an excellent strategy for your group. When you offer to give public speaking training or arrange for a public debate, you open the doors to future cooperation. When offering your services, do not demand something in return: just politely mention that if the event goes well you might be able to cooperate in the future. Of course, this assumes that the event is successful; but remember that what looks like a mediocre event to you might look fabulous to your potential partner. Any time parents see their children debating, the results are likely to be positive—no matter how bad the debate seems to you.

To take advantage of pre-giving, be sure to follow up by thanking potential partners for their involvement and offering to make concrete proposals for future cooperation. Be aware that every time you give to the community, you are setting your group up to “receive” and use that to create expansion of your activities.

## Non-debate Partnerships

Organizations that do not focus on debate may seem to be unlikely partners, but a strong relationship with them can be mutually beneficial. All groups value the communication and critical thinking skills that debate develops. You can help their members develop these skills and use events such as public debates to further their goals. In return, these organizations can help you in many ways. The most obvious is by spreading the word about your program and its benefits, but they can also:

- Provide judges at contests and debate tournaments.
  - Provide volunteers to help run events you are holding.
  - Provide car transportation to contests or events.
  - Put up posters in their neighborhood.
  - Provide office supplies or other supplies you might need.
  - Mention debates and debating to their schools.
  - Mention debates to public figures running for office.
  - Give items to raffle off, such as products, services, gift certificates, or lunch with a notable person.
  - Offer food and refreshments at events.
  - Make small cash donations to send debaters to training and/or tournaments
- . . . and many more.

Make sure to acknowledge even the smallest partnership and form of support. Include a list of all supporting and partnering groups on your website and make sure to thank them publicly. Every time an offered item is used, recognize that contribution.

## **School and Religious Organization Partnerships**

Schools can be a next step in your expansion. Having hosted a speaking contest or a public speaking training, schools can be invited to cooperate with your group to begin a debate club or to train students and teachers in debating activities. Schools can provide communication links to young people and parents. Schools can volunteer their facilities to host tournaments, and teachers can serve as judges at debate events. Even events as simple as a historical or holiday program might find a place within a school.

Churches, mosques, and synagogues can also offer many of the same benefits. They can help with communication channels, youth activities, venues for events, and volunteers for events. Make sure to clearly state that your group will partner with all religions.

## **Publicizing Partnerships**

Every partnership should be celebrated and publicized. Each bit of publicity should also invite others to become involved. Every project that involves partners and sponsors should list them and thank them. The website should salute all supporters individually, complete with logos and links to their websites. When people see others engaged in activities that are useful and fun, they will want to do so as well. Let this psychology work for you in your expansion efforts by letting everyone know who your sponsors and supporters are.

## **Networks and Leagues**

Networks and leagues can be useful expansions for your organization. A debate network refers to a group of societies or

clubs who informally join together to help and interact with one another. A league refers to a group of interested debaters or debating groups who have agreed to come together for the purposes of debating and debate competition. Once your group is up and running, you can find other groups and create broader debate opportunities for your members. Let me make clear that you want to build your own group, and then form new alliances in the expansion phase.

## **NETWORKS**

Creating or joining a network can be a great way to expand because you can take advantage of new opportunities while combining resources. Research similar groups in your area and see if they would be interested in working together. (You can find a census of debating groups at <http://idebate.org/sites/live/files/Global%20Debate%20Census%20FINAL.pdf>.)

### **Collaborating**

You can collaborate in myriad ways, including:

- *Hosting joint events.* If more than one group is committed to an event, you are more likely to reach the critical mass needed to hold it. You can also share staffing, hosting, and implementation duties. Almost any events can be held cooperatively, but the most common ones are: debate tournaments, training (for debaters, trainers, event organizers and publicity personnel), workshops, and public speaking competitions.
- *Exchanging visits.* Even if you don't stage joint events, a few members of your group can attend events held by another society. This is a good way to share ideas and for debaters to get to know one another. It also increases the prestige

and visibility of the event. And, the feeling of solidarity that can emerge helps in coordinating future joint efforts.

- *Sharing human resources.* Trainers from one group can train another. Judges from one group can exchange ideas with judges from the other. Core organizers can meet and share tactics. If one group has someone skilled in using the tab program, she can share that knowledge. Cooperative ventures allow groups to exchange some of their most treasured items—the experience and expertise of their members.

### **Creating National Networks**

If you have more than one debate program in your country, consider creating a national network. Many countries have done so. Creating a national network makes it easier to encourage other groups to join together. The appeal of, “join our national network” is stronger than a mere invitation to “come and do what we do.” Having a national network will help you gain support from large sponsors, government agencies, and international organizations interested in supporting groups that work to build and strengthen civil societies. The network should foster and empower smaller grassroots groups rather than impose its edicts from above.

The governance of a national network is beyond the scope of this volume. It depends on the culture of the country, the laws governing the creation of nonprofit organizations, and the wishes of those involved.

### **LEAGUES**

Creating leagues for competitions and tournaments can be an excellent way to expand. People in your group will tire of debating the same individuals in the same places and will find competition with other groups exciting and challenging.

A league holds regularly scheduled tournaments throughout the year. Hosts are determined in advance, and the calendar is constructed to benefit all parties and to avoid competition fatigue. Some leagues have yearlong sweepstakes, keeping track of how groups did to determine an overall year-end winner. (For an example, including rules, see <http://debate.uvm.edu/neudc/neudcsweepstakes201213.htm>.) Some leagues host a final championship tournament instead or as well. Leagues can be local, regional, or national depending on density of debate groups and geographical considerations.

A league benefits all members because it enables teams to predict events and budget adequately. Tournaments can be held in different locations, and, if very close by, groups can practice and train together or share resources. Most important, a league encourages cooperation among groups in the debating community.

## **International Cooperation**

The debate community is expanding rapidly worldwide. In almost every country, debate is taking root, growing, or mature. It has existed in some form throughout history wherever human civilization exists, but now it is growing in a more organized and systematic way. When you start a debate group in your local area, you join this wealth of critical thinking and respectful discourse. You should be proud of this new membership. You are not just one isolated group trying to establish debate; you are part of a global community eager to assist and advise its members.

## **TAKING ADVANTAGE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

The following international organizations (listed in order of importance) can help your group as it grows:

- International Debate Education Association (<http://idebate.org/about/idea>)  
This is the largest and best-funded organization promoting debate globally. It supports local programs; stages training events, tournaments and advocacy projects; and provides a huge archive of debate-related resources. Explore this website for excellent resources.
- World Debate Institute (<http://debate.uvm.edu/debateblog/wdi/Welcome.html>)  
This is the oldest international organization promoting debate. While it does not provide funding for debate activities, it does provide technical assistance and faculty for debate training programs worldwide. It also supports many online initiatives.
- Debate Central (<http://debate.uvm.edu>)  
This website, supported by the World Debate Institute but operating independently, is a one-stop resource for debate training and organizing. Begun in 1994, it shares thousands of training videos and texts and organizes debating news and resources from around the world.
- English-Speaking Union  
It organizes speech and debate contests at all levels and sponsors the England team to the World Schools Debating Championships. It has programs for schools at <http://www.esu.org/programmes/schools> and for universities at <http://www.esu.org/programmes/universities>.

- World Schools Debating Championships (<http://www.schoolsdebate.com/>).

It administers the world championship tournament each year for high school students. It has also recently started a charity to support debating at all school levels.

Many national and regional organizations also support debating in other nations. Some of the most active include:

Claremont Colleges National Debate Outreach (USA) (<http://www.claremontmckenna.edu/forensics/>), (<http://highschooldebate.org/>) and (<http://www.middleschooldebate.com/aboutus/aboutmispdp.htm>)

Works mostly at the level of high schools and middle schools; provides curriculum for training, recruitment, and other support materials.

Debate Academies ([http://debateacademy.net/Debate\\_Academy/Welcome.html](http://debateacademy.net/Debate_Academy/Welcome.html))

This program has sponsored debate training activities throughout the world and is looking for partners to stage training in their countries.

DebateMate (<http://www.debatemate.com/>)

This charity provides outreach to schools to create debate clubs and provide training and assistance.

National Forensic League (USA) (<http://www.nationalforensicleague.org/>)

The league is always looking for new U.S. schools to become members; it now supports debate in other countries, including Korea and China.

QatarDebate (<http://www.qatardebate.org/en/Home.aspx>)

This organization is active in promoting debate in Arabic and English throughout the Arab world and beyond;



it provides instructional materials and, at times, skilled trainers.

Society for Associated Inter-tertiary Debaters (Singapore) (<http://saidsg.wordpress.com/>)

Does outreach to Asian countries at the high school and college level and sends trainers to interested parties. It has recently been very active in China.

Za in Proti, Institute for the Culture of Dialog (Slovenia) (<http://www.zainproti.com/web/index.php/splono.html>): This site, in Slovak, provides support for debating in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and beyond with trainings and curriculum; it is also looking for groups to partner with them in applying for grants.

Many smaller organizations have pages on Facebook.

## **REGIONAL DEBATING CHAMPIONSHIPS**

A number of regional debating championships are held each year—most at the university level. Locate a regional championship in your area and find out how you can attend or become more involved. Through this involvement you will meet many other groups very much like yours.

Asian British Parliamentary Debate Championships (<http://indodebate.blogspot.com/2012/03/asian-bp-jakarta-dates-confirmed.html>)

AsianSchoolsDebatingChampionship([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian\\_Schools\\_Debate\\_Championship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_Schools_Debate_Championship))

Australasian Interschool Debating Championships ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australasian\\_Interschool\\_Debating\\_Championships](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australasian_Interschool_Debating_Championships))

Campeonato Mundial Universitario de Debate (Spanish) ([http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/cmude\\_newsletter-n1-cmude-2012-english.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/cmude_newsletter-n1-cmude-2012-english.pdf))

Eurasian Schools Debating Championship (<http://www.esdc2013.org/esdc-2012.html>)

European Universities Debating Championships (<http://eudc.wikidot.com/>)

Karl Popper Debating World Championships (<http://idebate.org/events/karl-popper-debating-championship-2012>)

Pan African Universities Debating Championships (<http://www.africandebating.org/paudc/>)

Pan American Schools Debate Championship (previous website) (<http://panamdebate.wordpress.com/about/>)

United Asian Debating Championships ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Asian\\_Debating\\_Championships](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Asian_Debating_Championships))

World Universities Debating Championships (<http://www.wudc.info/>)

## **INTERNATIONAL DEBATE TRAINING PROGRAMS**

Several groups host international debate training events, usually annually. Here are some of the major ones.

### **For high school students/teachers**

World Schools Debate Academy ([http://debateacademy.net/Debate\\_Academy/WSDA\\_Slovenia.html](http://debateacademy.net/Debate_Academy/WSDA_Slovenia.html))

IDEA Global Youth Forum (<http://youthforum.idebate.org/>)

### **For university students and/or teachers**

Asian Debate Institute (<https://www.facebook.com/AsianDebateInstitute>)

Dutch Anglo-Saxon Parliamentary Debate Institute (<http://www.dapdi.nl/>)

International Debate Academy Slovenia ([http://debateacademy.net/Debate\\_Academy/IDA\\_Slovenia.html](http://debateacademy.net/Debate_Academy/IDA_Slovenia.html))

International Debate Camp Porto (<http://idcporto.wordpress.com/>)

North America Debate Academy ([http://debateacademy.net/Debate\\_Academy/NADA\\_Vermont.html](http://debateacademy.net/Debate_Academy/NADA_Vermont.html))

## Conclusion

This chapter outlined many different paths you can take in the expansion of your program, but also talks about when such expansion is worthwhile. There are certainly more possibilities and techniques for growth than have been mentioned here, and you should work with your group to find what works best for you. We are often attracted to debate because we like the exchange of ideas. Incredible opportunities are all around you for cooperation, networking, and mutual support. It is up to you to take advantage of them.

## References

Bond, Robert, et al, "A 61Million-person Experiment in Social Influence and Political Mobilization," *Nature* 489 (September 13, 2012): 295–298. [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/bond\\_et\\_al\\_2012%2261millionpersoninfluenceexperiment.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/bond_et_al_2012%2261millionpersoninfluenceexperiment.pdf)

**Additional Materials**

Snider, Alfred. "Cultural Differences and Debating." *Teaching Citizenship* 33 (Summer 2012). Scroll down to find the article.  
[http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Snider\\_culturaldifferencesanddebating\\_2012.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Snider_culturaldifferencesanddebating_2012.pdf)



## CHAPTER 10

# Community Group Specifics

Much of this book has concerned itself with developing a program focused on debate, but you can use debate activities to enrich your group, regardless of its mission. Often, community organizations are looking to expand their activities and harness the enthusiasm of their members. Speech, discussion, and debate activities can fill the bill. They can help members deal with issues of concern, allow new modes of involvement in issues connected with the group's activities, create a new and interesting way to interact, and provide new ways to educate the community about the organization.

Including a speech component in your group's activities can be a unifying experience and add variety and enthusiasm to a meeting. All groups thrive when members are active—communicating is an important and meaningful method of promoting participation and commitment. To the extent that all members are engaged in talking, sharing, discussing, and maybe even debating, they become more involved with the organization.

## Integrating Debate

To integrate debate successfully, you must adapt it to the needs and interests of your organization. You don't want your group to become a debating society, rather your goal is for members to use the tools of speech and debate to enhance the existing program.

You can integrate speech, discussion, and debate activities in a variety of ways. When considering how to do so, think about:

- *How your group can extend its outreach.* Your organization has interests and a message, so you might ask how this message can be carried outside your group. A speech contest, a public discussion, or a debate might take the work of the group into the community.
- *How you might use speech activities to improve and further the involvement of members.* Some groups hold regularly scheduled meetings to discuss the future and ways in which they might grow and improve. Others have looked at ways to train members to promote the goals of the group. Business groups, for example, often hold internal events to train employees in sales techniques, to produce publicity materials, and to use social media. These activities may not seem totally germane to the subject of this book, but they are human communication events where ideas are compared, critically analyzed, and evaluated.

Many of the activities we've discussed might be appropriate for your group. Members might hold a public speaking contest about an issue related to your group's mission; they might hold a public meeting about some issue important to them; or they might stage a debate to bring awareness to some area of controversy. For example, the Native Sons of the Golden West, a group interested in California history,

suggested sponsoring a high school public speaking contest on topics related to state history. The group offered a small cash prize and some simple awards for participants. The event started small but grew; within a few years, many smaller speaking events produced winners who advanced to a gala final contest. Native Sons of the Golden West were delighted to see young people talking about a subject important to them, the young people enjoyed participating, and the publicity given the events drew more people to join the group. This is not an isolated example; just type “Rotary Club speech contest” into a search engine to learn of hundreds of Rotary Clubs around the world using this technique.

## **Empowerment and Praise**

Adding speech activities can be an empowering experience for group members. Many organizations have enthusiastic members who are looking for new ways to become more involved. Asking them to organize a speaking contest, coordinate a public discussion, and/or stage a debate event is a perfect way to harness their enthusiasm to a goal. Often they will vigorously pursue the effort as a way to prove themselves to the rest of the group. Aspiring leaders can be trained as well as vetted by being involved in such activities.

When members organize and take part in these activities, it's very important to offer them public praise for their work. Public praise within a small group creates positive feelings, makes those who did work eager to do more, demonstrates to less active members that they could receive the same accolades, and presents a vibrant group that's on its way to being a community instead of just a regular gathering.

## **Avoiding the Domination of the Few**

Human beings can be “territorial.” They can act in possessive ways about ideas and activities as well as about spaces. One person might become uniquely identified with an activity and exclude others. While this is natural, it is not productive. If that person should leave the group or become inactive, the project might falter. And, if an activity becomes the province of one person, other members won’t feel connection to it. A program will grow if more people are allowed to be an important part of the effort.

If you think a person is becoming possessive, praise him for starting and working on the project, but always encourage him to involve others. The “each one teach one” logic can help these activities grow and diversify instead of becoming an individual fiefdom. Encourage the individual to expand the activity—when he says this will involve additional work, suggest recruiting other members to help him. Congratulate him on “growing the program” when he involves other people. People may be territorial, but they also want to be appreciated, so praise people when they involve others.

## **More Smaller vs. Fewer Larger Activities**

Remember that while adding communications activities can enhance your group, they should not dominate your agenda. Hold several smaller communication activities that forward your mission rather than stage a large event that may drain resources and distract the group from its goals. By all means, add a debate component to your activities, but remember to respect the original concept of your group as you incorporate debate.



## **Each One Bring One**

People who are involved in this particular effort should feel welcome to recruit others to help. In terms of judging, organizing, and managing communication flows, much needs to be done and more people are a great help. Publicity can be a place where more minds and hands are always welcome.

## **Transparency Is Essential**

Make sure that everyone is aware that your group has added communication activities to its program. Make reporting on them a regular agenda item at meetings so that everyone knows what is happening and views the new activities as a central part of the group's program. You can also reinforce the centrality of debate in your organization by incorporating speech, discussion, and other debate activities into your group's social occasions.

## **Reward Yourself and Your Service**

To successfully incorporate debate into your program takes hard work and dedication. You need to dream big, plan well, remain determined through time, and be willing to follow through. When you have succeeded, take the time to congratulate and reward yourself. Your work has helped further civil and constructive communication—both valuable and important in the twenty-first century. You have aided people in gaining their voices and using them in meaningful ways. Make sure to congratulate yourself for this accomplishment and realize that it is an important part of the service that your group provides. Share your achievements and make sure everyone knows they are also the achievements of your group.

## **Conclusion**

Speech, discussion, and debate activities can be an excellent way to add value to existing groups and clubs. Members can be empowered and entertained, while concurrently giving a focus on issues they consider important. Adding a communications component to a group's activities demands few resources but results in many rich returns.

## **Additional Materials**

Our Community. "Marketing and Your Community Group—Producing a Communications Strategy." [http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing\\_article.jsp?articleId=1601](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1601)

Windingland, Diane. "Take Your Speaking from FREE to FEE." Virtual Speech Coach, March 13, 2013. <http://www.virtualspeechcoach.com/tag/service-club-speaking/>



## CHAPTER 11

# Debate Activities in Schools

Schools are major incubators for debate activities. Students who become involved in speech, discussion, and debate go on to spread these activities wherever they go. They attend colleges and universities where they start or join debate programs. They become engaged citizens, using their voices and abilities to improve their communities and society. They often appear as major supporters of debating activities by serving as coaches, judges, and organizers. One testament to the importance of debating skills is that those who acquire them usually remember where they got them and how important the experience of debating was to them.

This chapter focuses on high schools, but debate need not be first introduced only in these years. Middle school is a perfect time to introduce students to debate activities because they have a lot to say and a desire to speak. Even elementary school students are excited and ready to participate.

If you are planning to create debate activities in a school setting, then most of this book should be useful. Planning, establishing, promoting, publicizing, staging events, as well as training techniques are all relevant to your situation. However,

you need to be aware of some specific concerns about operating at a school level. This chapter addresses these.

## **Students Come First**

When developing your program, remember that students must come first. As we have seen, debate activities can benefit all students. Thus, any school debate program should involve as many students as possible. Too often school programs focus on just a few elite students to the exclusion of others. This may lead to competitive success, but often the beneficiaries of this approach (besides a few students) are organizers and school administrators who want to show success for their school and their program. Students benefit dramatically from being involved in debate activities even if they are not top academic performers (Greenland 2010). Debate equips them with critical life and professional skills, the teaching of which is often ignored or short-changed in the contemporary curriculum.

## **Serving the Interests of the School**

School programs should be designed to advance the interests of the school. Assess the situation at your school and determine how these activities can assist in achieving its mission. For example, a school with a specific academic interest (such as a magnet school) might have its debating program engage in activities that explore and promote that area of study. A school without substantial outreach to the community might stage activities in the community. If the school wants to encourage parental involvement, it can use the debate program to expand support. If the school aspires to move students on to top universities, it can use the debate program to highlight the academic quality of its students. If

the school wants to make debating an important element of its mission, the program itself needs to determine how best to do this in light of the school's resources.

## **Advisors**

For a debate program to be organized and grow coherently, it needs a sponsor or advisor from within the school, usually a teacher. This individual need not be responsible for all the duties associated with debating, but she should oversee the program and advise. She might become an active coach, training students and attending debate tournaments with them, or might merely help organize the club.

### **FINDING A FACULTY PARTNER OR ADVISOR**

Begin your search for an advisor by asking students or parents for recommendations; then approach those recommended. Avoid approaching an administrator first. She might suggest a teacher for the wrong reason. She might recommend a teacher who is not involved in any extracurricular activities and so has free time. But that individual may lack the motivation and skill to organize the program. Or she might suggest an enthusiastic teacher who is already overcommitted and so won't be able to devote a lot of attention to the program. By all means, approach the school administration if you have no other choice, but, if possible, locate a willing and able teacher through other means and then approach the administrator about beginning the program. You can then tell the administrator that you have a specific teacher who would like to explore such opportunities, or, better yet, you and the teacher can meet with the appropriate individual. This approach has an additional benefit. It shows the administrator, who most likely will have to approve your program, that you have the

initiative and enthusiasm needed to create a program and that you have thought through what establishing it might entail.

In approaching a potential advisor, don't tell her that you want to create a large debate program. Instead, ask her to explore interests and possible activities. If the program seems daunting, she may balk at becoming involved, but if you present the meeting as an exploratory session she may be more willing to participate—and your enthusiasm may inspire her. Invite the teacher to begin the journey and then see where it takes her. When teachers are given control over how far they wish to go, they are likely to go a longer distance.

The teacher will want to know what you will expect of her. Be very specific about what her duties will entail. Do you want her to hold meetings for interested students, to advise students on how to organize and train, or to help students stage activities to showcase their abilities? Always be cautious about demanding too much. You might want to reserve any discussion of competitive debates and attending debate tournaments in other locations until you gauge the teacher's enthusiasm. Emphasize that the program will be under the teacher's control but that a substantial burden in carrying it out will be on the students.

### **UTILIZING MORE THAN ONE FACULTY ADVISOR**

Successful school programs often have more than one teacher advisor—usually not until the program is well-established, but you should involve more people as soon as possible for several reasons. First, a teacher might be reassigned or change duty, so having more than one advisor guarantees continuity in leadership. Second, with multiple advisors, tasks can be divided so that no teacher becomes overextended or feels burned out as the program expands. Third, with multiple advisors, the program can take advantage of special expertise or

interests. For example, one teacher might coordinate staging activities while the other focuses on training. In some schools, one teacher deals with debate in the local language and another deals with debate in English. Diversify roles early, before the program becomes extremely complex.

### **SUPPORTING THE ADVISOR**

The administration needs to know what good work the advisor is doing. Students can create thank you events and letters to remind the school administration of this and perhaps even ask that letters be put in the teacher's file. Parents might write thank you letters to the school for the same purpose. Publicity for the program should always include praise for the advisor. Most of the group's activities could not take place without your advisor, thus you need to give recognition as often as possible.

If possible, be alert for situations in which the group can help the advisor's career. When an advisor is up for promotion or a pay increase, you might come forward with an endorsement. You might support your advisor's application to attend a conference that focuses on debate or encourage her to publish papers about their debate activities.

### **Recruiting Students**

When recruiting students, think about what would interest them. Debate may be engaging and interesting once you become involved, but it needs an initial spark to attract students. Make sure to review the various kinds of appeals (social, intellectual, competitive, travel) that can be made to recruit. Use these as you attract students to the debating activities you have planned.

### **ARRANGE CLASS VISITATIONS**

One way to recruit students is to have your club's organizers make a very short presentation to classes about the debate program and invite students to join. Some programs have staged short debates about a subject relevant to a class and then followed up with questions and discussion. Visitations can both attract students and generate support from other teachers. Such support can be valuable at many levels, whether saying good things about the program at a faculty meeting or agreeing to judge a speaking event. Show people what debating actually is so that they can appreciate it and let go of any stereotypes they may have.

### **ARRANGE SCHOOL EVENTS**

Think of school events you could use to recruit members. If the school is addressing an important issue, the debate program can create an event with that as its theme. The group might hold a short debate in front of the student body, a short debate for parents at an evening session, or a speaking contest in front of different classes. Let everyone know what your group does, and, when they see its value, they will become allies. In any school environment, the more allies you have, the better off you will be. In Slovenia, middle school students debated teachers about requiring homework, with the sides reversed—the teachers argued for less homework. This event became so popular that it was then staged for parents and ultimately broadcast on a community radio station.

### **BECOMING A PART OF NORMAL SCHOOL NEWS FLOW**

Every school has a normal flow of information about that school. This may include a newsletter to parents, a school newspaper, announcements made in the morning, a school website, and other information channels. Make sure news



about the debate program is included in all of these. Provide information about trainings, meetings, events, competitions, and successes. This will help the debate program become an active part of the life of the school.

## **Bringing Honor and Prestige to the School**

Many administrators are concerned about the way the community or officials view their school, so finding ways to use the debate program to bring honor and prestige to the school will encourage their support. At every public or in-school event, emphasize that the debate program represents the school. Awards specially impress administrators. If your club wins a trophy, give it to the top administrator and ask to have it prominently displayed. Schools often do this with sporting awards, and they should be encouraged to do so for awards that recognize intellectual achievements as well. Teachers have reported that after such a “gift” the support for the program increased. Administrators are trying to get their school noticed and honored, you become their partners when you provide them the means to do so.

## **Utilizing Parents**

Never underestimate the value of parent support for debating activities. Stage events so that parents can see their children speaking, discussing, and debating, and they will love it. I have yet to see a parent who was not pleased to see her child give a speech. Encourage parents to participate in your program, not only as members of the audience but also as judges, organizers, and chaperones on trips. Parents with appropriate skills (good basic communication skills, friendly attitude toward students, basic background knowledge and

perhaps even some debating experience) can help with student training. Parents can draft letters to school officials in support of the program. Many schools have parent associations that have formed to support debating activities. Parents are the main connection between a school and the community it serves. Use that connection to enhance your debating program and activities.

## **Debate in the Curriculum**

Many teachers all over the world are successfully using debate in the classroom. Debate is an active learning method that engages students with the material in almost any curricular area—including science and math—in a meaningful and enjoyable way. It can be used a little or a lot and takes very little extra training.

Most teachers who have used this technique find it rewarding and successful. Once you have established your debate program in a school, you can approach teachers and explain the benefits of including debate in their classroom activities. Their classrooms will benefit and so will you—they may become your allies and encourage students to join your program

To help teachers introduce their students to debate, you can stage short debates focusing on what classes are studying. These serve not only as stand-alone educational events but also enhance the credibility of the debate program.

Debating in the classroom is a large topic, and fortunately there is a rich literature about this technique. *Many Sides: Debate Across the Curriculum* (<http://idebate.org/sites/live/files/9781932716177.pdf>) deals with debate in a comprehensive manner. *Speaking Across the Curriculum* (<http://idebate.org>)

org/sites/live/files/handouts/Speaking%20Across%20the%20Curriculum.pdf) looks at speech activities in general.

## **Adding Competition**

If you want to add competitive activities to your program, first stage these activities in the school. Starting “at home” serves several functions: it educates students about debate; serves as a recruiting tool; trains new debaters; and familiarizes them with the realities of speech, discussion, and debate contests (such as winning, losing, judgment, and stress). Students can take part in a wide variety of activities after just a few training sessions. Possibilities include speech contests, discussions about important issues with prizes given to the best two participants, exhibition debates of various lengths, and even an all-school debating contest. These can be held at almost no expense but with considerable benefit. These activities will increase interest for a next step, inter-school activities.

After you’ve staged events inside the school, the stage is set for activities between schools. This can grow from debate across town to across the nation and then across the world. The globe becomes your playing field—but start local and grow when you can.

## **Working with Other Schools**

Once your school club is established, think of working with other schools to enlarge your program and expand debate. Find another school that engages in similar activities and suggest initial meetings to exchange ideas and gauge their level of interest. If no school near you has a debating program, meet with people at likely schools and help them start a debating group. You might begin by sharing this text.

You can work with other schools in many ways. Here are some—listed from the easiest to the most complex:

- *Exchanges at meetings.* Invite representatives from the other school to come to your meetings and see how your club operates. Likewise, you can go to some of their meetings. These meetings are a good opportunity to get to know one another and exchange ideas.
- *Combined training sessions.* Attend each other's training sessions so you can further develop your cooperation while sharing your knowledge.
- *Practice debates.* Invite the other school to attend a practice debate session at your school (or you can visit them) to learn together as well as to gauge the abilities of the other group. Don't fear that you are helping your eventual competition because all will ultimately benefit.
- *Home-on-home public debates.* Stage a public debate at each other's schools. Do not worry if the home team judges give their team the win because these debates are in the spirit of the exchange. The real competition will come later.
- *Small tournaments.* Hold a weekend tournament in which each of the teams in your group debate teams in theirs. Or, combine teams and have each club debate the other. The idea is to create a tournament atmosphere.
- *Tournaments for a number of schools.* Host a tournament and invite a number of schools from the area.
- *Leagues.* Form a league to hold regular debates and recognize outstanding performances.
- *Outreach programs.* Join with other debate clubs to spread the debating culture to other schools.

## **Addressing Turnover**

One issue that school-based teams face is the turnover of the most engaged and enthusiastic students, who are usually the leaders of the group. If these students graduate at the same time, you may have a vacuum in leadership. Anticipate this by getting younger students involved in important leadership positions. A little forethought can keep the debating group at your school active and vital.

## **Using Alumni**

Alumni can be useful to your program in a variety of ways. They can operate as ambassadors, creating new contacts and opportunities for you. Alumni can serve as trainers and judges at your events. Eventually alumni take up important roles in your community; they will be proud that they were a part of your group and provide significant support. Some may return to the school as teachers and become the advisor of your club. This sort of continuity and involvement is extremely beneficial.

Stay in contact with your alumni. If you have an email newsletter, make sure they receive it. Since email addresses can change, use Facebook or other social media groups to keep in touch. Publicize the achievements of your alumni, both in terms of helping your club and in terms of succeeding in life. As time goes by, consider giving a “most valuable alumni” award each year.

## **Conclusion**

If you are interested in debating, you want to institute that activity in your local school. But your commitment should be to more than just establishing a club. You want to ensure

that it will continue growing and will last through time. Also, work to create similar groups at schools around you. We cannot depend on one club at one school to help create a truly civil society. We can, however, expect that a network of such groups can have a substantial impact on their community and society in general. Remember, no matter what happens in an organizational sense, each young person who develops the skills debating fosters will become a more successful citizen and enjoy an enhanced vocational, professional, community, and personal life. These are all well worth working for.

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## CHAPTER 12

# Universities Specifics

Of all debating around the world, university debating seems to be growing the fastest. In almost every country imaginable, college and university students are forming debate societies and debating each other, other institutions, and students from other countries. The World Universities Debating Championship will often host 400 teams from 80 countries; while hundreds of other teams want to attend but cannot for lack of room. This chapter discusses how you can become part of the global effort. It won't be easy, but remain optimistic—what others have done you can do as well.

This chapter builds on many of the ideas in previous chapters about planning, implementing, recruiting, and guiding your program toward an active phase full of training, competitions, and events. You need to consider all of these when developing your program, but you must also deal with challenges unique to creating debate activities in a university setting.

### **Understanding the Setting**

Each university is different, with different histories, customs, and administrative procedures. You must be aware of



these before you begin organizing. In some universities, most extracurricular activities, including debating, take place in student-organized clubs. In others, debate groups are formally associated with academic departments (such as communication in the American model). Universities with a number of different faculties (the European model) may have different procedures for formally recognizing groups depending on the faculty. In some universities, activities that are related to language use are best affiliated with a school of languages (as in the Asia model). In other universities, debating is located within a so-called union (an older name for a student group that may well have substantial faculty support, with current examples being the Oxford Union and the Cambridge Union) that promotes debating as well as social and educational programs. You need to be aware of these differences so that you can follow proper procedure in setting up your organization, and, ultimately, so you improve your group's opportunity to grow over time.

Organizing a debate club at a university is, in several ways, easier than creating one at a secondary school. The students are older and are more capable of taking the initiative in planning and organizing. While having a faculty advisor is an excellent idea, it is not as crucial as it is at the school level. Because many students live at or near the campus, events and meetings are easier to schedule. Whereas high school students attend classes all day, university students have varied schedules with breaks between classes, so they can more easily integrate debate into their day. And, because students are older, they don't need chaperones when traveling. As older students become more experienced, elevating them to positions such as trainers and judges is easier. University students are also more capable of successfully completing the many administrative functions of holding debate events and

taking trips than are their younger counterparts. You should use all of these factors to your advantage.

Of course, some aspects of university life make starting and sustaining a debate society harder. You are less likely to have significant parent support at the university level. Also, because university students are adults, they may have legal access to alcohol, which can create problems.

## **Student Motivators**

University students have a variety of reasons for becoming involved in debating activities. Students may be attracted by competition, travel, and the opportunity for academic networking. They may want to gain skills needed for professional success, but they also may be looking for social involvement with other intelligent students. This is especially true in the early years at university, where students have left their high school bubble and their childhood homes and are now in a new environment looking for social outlets. Thus, debate organizations at the university level should also involve a measure of social interaction—events, parties, and other activities. Finally, university students may be very concerned about social issues and see debate as a platform for expressing their views and advocating for change. As you organize and develop your group, keep all student goals in mind.

## **Utilizing School Features**

Every college and university is different. Determine the unique features of your institution and take advantage of them when developing your program. For example, if your university is known for specific areas of study, develop your program around these. Law, medicine, business, languages, and other

specialties might be reflected in the events staged and the topics debated. The closer the relationship between debating and future careers, the more interested students will be. Or, if your institution features study abroad, you might want to create networks with other university debate groups so that students have the possibility of remaining active in debating while they are away. Find out what is distinctive about your university and then look for a way to make debating more relevant to that characteristic.

## **Club Creation**

A debating club always starts with student interest. Find students who might be attracted to a debating program and have an informal meeting to discuss possible plans and strategies. Don't make decisions at this point; just explore opportunities and create a shared vision among those interested. Ask each person to commit to finding several other people who might want to be involved. Schedule another meeting and have an agenda for action. Soon you should have an idea about who your central organizers will be.

You don't need a lot of people to start something important; three to five can begin things. Three students met in a dormitory at the University of Vermont in 1899 and decided to start a debating society. It is now named the Lawrence Debate Union after one of the original three. More than a century later, it is extremely active, recognized, and financially secure. Your tradition will begin at this first meeting.

## **FORMAL RECOGNITION**

Because your group will represent the institution in academic competitions, you need to ask the college for formal recognition. Each institution has different procedures for doing so.

Make sure you understand them and prepare the documentation you need. You might need to develop a mission statement or constitution, create a list of interested students, or present an initial budget and funding request—the requirements vary. Often formal club recognition is handled through an office of student activities, student life, or even through an elected student government. Because many European universities are divided into different faculties, student groups will need to apply for recognition within their particular faculty. If you are asked to attend any meetings with the administration, make sure you are well-prepared and bring several representatives. You are “selling” your organization, so make your presentation strong. Formal recognition is an important step and should be treated as such.

### **DEPARTMENT OR PROGRAM RECOGNITION**

You might want to affiliate your organization with a specific part of the university, such as an academic department or program. This has been very successful in the United States, where debating programs often are attached to communication, political science, or philosophy departments. This connection can give your group increased status and recognition, and, in some cases, academic programs are willing to allocate funds for debate. In many cases, connecting to a department can be combined with recognition as a student club. Many groups receive funding both as a student group and as an academically related program. Often a program that has a home in more than one spot is more secure.

Work with your central organizers to determine which program or department to approach and create specific arguments about why such a partnership is beneficial. Find a supportive faculty member; then schedule meetings with program or department leaders to discuss possible affiliations.

Don't ask for funding right away. Instead, show how you can make a strong contribution to their program and a small amount of funding might follow. If you use the funds wisely, you may receive larger allocations in the future. Asking for too much too early can result in a firm "no." By starting small, you can grow.

Affiliating with a program has an additional benefit—faculty members can become your best advocates inside their department. They may also act as faculty advisors or serve as judges. Approach them and some may respond positively.

## **Assisting the University**

If you help people, they are very likely to help you. This is especially true at a university. Think of ways you can assist the university or specific departments and programs, and they may decide to support or partner with you. Some of the ways your group can support a university are easy to implement because they are a part of your normal activities. For example, your group could:

- *Share skills.* Stage public speaking and interview workshops to help students improve their vocational opportunities.
- *Focus on relevant issues.* Stage discussions or debates about issues important to a department or to the university as a whole.
- *Help bridge communication divides.* When one university president was hesitant to speak to an angry group of faculty and students about suggested budget cuts, a debate program offered to hold a public meeting so that both sides could be heard. The university president was extremely grateful, as were all parties.

- *Work with admissions.* Offer to have your members speak to potential students about the university.
- *Offer the same service to the alumni office.* Alumni officers often love showing alumni a short debate.
- *Become an ambassador for the university in the wider community.* Identify areas of the community the university views as important and reach out to them. These might include helping in local schools or youth groups or promoting local sporting events. Often the university's publicity or other outreach office can help you locate opportunities; usually the staff will welcome your assistance.

When you suggest an activity, stress that your group will be responsible for carrying it out. Don't request a lot of help from the faculty or administration. You want to show that your group will be an asset to the university, not a burden. When you do that, the administration and faculty will be more interested in welcoming you.

## **Intra-university Events**

A university is an ideal place in which to hold debating events. It is a community of intellectuals with skills, interests, energy, and time. A university campus can be an excellent hub for political, social, and intellectual activism. Of all the locations for debating activities covered in this book, the university setting is most promising.

You can stage many of the events discussed throughout this book, but I have found those listed below to be of special value in a university setting:

- *Public speaking and debate training.* Have regular training and make it open to the entire university community.

- *Outreach events to high school students, including training and contest sponsorship.* This will help recruit talented students interested in debating. They may very well then attend your university and become part of your program.
- *Discussions about important issues.* Remember, a discussion is really a debate, only far less formal in nature.
- *Public debates about issues of interest.* Recruit partners, engage professors, and design the event to involve audiences.
- *Regular radio or television program.* Take advantage of campus media outlets, particularly radio.
- *Public speaking contests.* Target all students, or just a segment of the student population or area of study.
- *On-campus debate tournament.* This might be an open event for all students, or it might pit some groups (departments, fraternities, sororities) against each other. Schedule the tournament over a period of weeks and then hold a gala final event.

## Inter-university Events

We've discussed the events you might stage in Chapter 6 and Chapter 8, but it's important to remember that some aspects of these events may be a bit different in a university situation. Below are some points you need to consider:

- *Follow university procedure for reserving rooms.* Schedule rooms early to ensure that you get the space you want. Some universities will charge for room use, so negotiate if you need to. Always have the paperwork associated with

room reservations during the event. Some professors think they can use space whenever they wish, consequently, you may have to show that you have formal administration approval. If the professor disrupts your event or refuses to give up the space, report him to the administrator in charge of room assignments. This can be very effective, if not endearing to that professor.

- *Make sure you understand and follow university procedures for providing food and beverages.* Some universities have lists of approved caterers, many of which offer discounts. In some instances, you must use the university-authorized food service, although you might be able to petition authorities for an exemption for some events. Many universities have regulations about providing or consuming alcohol on campus; it is essential to be aware of and follow these. Remember that whenever you serve food, you must clean up the space after the event. Failure to do so may result in considerable extra custodial charges. If you are serving food, request extra trash containers and buy extra trash bags in advance.
- *Provide directions to your event, both online and at the university.* Have maps available when people arrive for the event. Universities can be complex physical entities, so highlight the facilities you are using. Create signs directing people to the appropriate building and rooms.
- *Make sure your event appears on the university calendar.* Often these are found online and are shared with the local media.
- *Inform the media relations or publicity office about your event.* These offices are always looking for stories that can showcase the university. They can help you work with area media as they already have established relations with them.



- *Make sure you can reach those who have the keys to the rooms you will be using.* Often this is security or custodial services. Prior to the event, confirm when doors will be opened and what should be done if they are not. Often doors are not opened for specific one-time events, and you don't want to discover the morning of your event that the people with the keys are not available. In some rare instances you, as an organizer, might be trusted with keys. I often begin each day of an event by having someone make sure all doors are unlocked so the event isn't delayed.
- *Determine when and where visitors can park.* Include this information in the materials you send participants. Often university parking officials will issue temporary permits that you can distribute to attendees. To make sure your guests won't have problems, inform university security or the office in charge of parking of your event.

These concerns are applicable to most universities. Every university is unique, and you might need to consider other factors before holding events.

## **Demonstrations at Other University Events**

Watch the advanced schedule for events at your university. If you can think of a way your debating group can play a role in these, volunteer. If you know someone who might be organizing an event, contact them before they begin planning to see if they might be interested in a debate component. For example, debate groups have staged short debates for businesspersons attending a weekend conference on entrepreneurship; they have given training in communication skills to local food vendors meeting at a "Promote Local Food" meeting hosted by a

school of agriculture; and, they have offered basic instruction in persuasion to sales staffs attending a meeting hosted by a business school. Discussions and short debates are almost always welcome; people organizing these events are looking for a way to showcase the university.

## **Utilizing University Media Networks**

Make sure that university media networks know what your group is doing. It is their job to promote the university and create publicity. When you help them, you become an ally; when you don't, you may be seen as a competitor. You can also become a publicity multiplier. You have a web of communication surrounding your group, so make sure that all publicity avenues associated with the university are connected to it. You can ask one of your members to serve as the publicity officer to handle all the group's publicity efforts and to be the point of contact for university publicity services.

## **Avoiding the Up-and-Down University Cycle**

In university clubs, students in leadership roles come and go quickly; few last more than two years. Their loss can have a serious effect on your group because in a university program students are very active as trainers, judges, organizers, and officers. Consequently, student leaders need to be renewed and refreshed regularly. During any year, think about who will fill leadership roles in the next year and consider how to prepare them now for that future role. Many successful university programs have younger students serve as apprentices to older students so that they are ready to take over when their mentors leave. This process can be formal or informal.

Many excellent university programs have experienced profound ups and downs in their success precisely because all of the leaders have graduated and moved on at once. Think ahead and avoid this.

## **Using Alumni**

Those who benefit from your program will remember their experience, so maintain contact with members who have graduated or moved. This may be difficult because debaters can go on to careers that can take them around the world. Keep connections through email but also through Facebook or social media. Create a section of your communication network that tries to stay in touch with your alumni. Many successful university programs mix news of what their alumni are doing with news of current debaters, creating a commonality that is appealing. Invite alumni back when you have tournaments or a year-end banquet and let them know that they are remembered and appreciated. If you remember them, they will remember and support you.

## **Working with Alumni and Development Offices**

Universities devote considerable time and effort to maintaining contact with alumni. Offer to become a part of this effort, sharing information about former debaters if the alumni office will also share its information with you. You may be able to use their address databases, bulk mailing permits, and other resources.

Once you develop your alumni contacts, you can use the information for fund-raising. Just remember that some

universities are very restrictive about whether you can approach alumni for donations, so be sure to ask before you solicit funds.

Often former debaters realize that their current successes are attributable at least in part to their debate training, and they feel grateful for it. Let them know that they can repay what they've received by making donations to give current debaters similar opportunities. Many successful former debaters will naturally develop into benefactors for the university, and this realization may help create more cooperation from university alumni offices. At some American universities, alumni offices will suggest to wealthy alumni that they establish an endowment for the debate program. Many American schools are now seeing the results of this kind of suggestion. An endowment is a tremendous achievement because it keeps creating income for the debate program year after year. Establishing an endowment involves legal matters that are beyond you, but they are certainly not beyond the alumni and development offices of your university.

## Travel

### **BASIC GUIDELINES**

University debaters frequently travel to regional, national, and even international tournaments. Travel opportunities can be an important way to attract people to your program, so make your previous travel opportunities (if any) a prominent part of your recruiting efforts.

The benefits of travel also come with substantial responsibility, however. When members of your debate group are traveling, they represent your university and so need to abide by the university's guidelines for travel. These can help

prevent misunderstandings and misbehavior. Each university and each group will have guidelines unique to the institution and to the type of travel. Here are links to two examples:

international guidelines [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/ldu\\_intl\\_travel\\_protocol\\_2012.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/ldu_intl_travel_protocol_2012.pdf)

domestic guidelines [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/ldu\\_dom\\_travel\\_prot\\_2012.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/ldu_dom_travel_prot_2012.pdf)

Make sure everyone understands the guidelines in advance to avoid problems.

Make decisions about where to travel and who to send openly and honestly. Some groups appoint a committee to decide who gets different opportunities, others hold a small tournament to determine who will go to a national or international tournament. If a program has a professional director and professional coaches, they might make the decision. Regardless of how you make the decision, make the process transparent. If students want travel opportunities, they should know what they have to do to earn them and how that decision will be made.

Every program develops its own method of determining who gets to travel, but one simple system involves three criteria:

1. Ability to represent with distinction (win, succeed, but also do so with grace).
2. Amount of effort shown in preparing for debating (hard work).
3. Extent to which the individual has helped others and the group as a whole (support for the organization).

Using these three criteria helps avoid the lazy but talented from getting the bulk of the opportunities. It also avoids the

hard working but untalented from getting all the opportunities and requires a broader organizational contribution to earn the right to represent your group. Develop criteria that are relevant to your group, but make sure they are public.

Travel arrangements depend on the specific situation. Needless to say, planning early, especially buying airline tickets early, can result in considerable savings. Housing can be arranged either through hosts, staying with friends, or staying in inexpensive hotels and hostels. Online searches have made making these arrangements much easier.

## **FUNDING**

How travel is funded varies from program to program. Some programs have funds specifically for travel, some require students to pay their own way, and some have a mixture of the two. Regardless of how you handle travel, make sure all attendees have similar arrangements. Avoid having wealthy students stay at luxury hotels while others stay on the couches of friends. Such inequality is detrimental to the unity and comradeship of the team. Your debate group should not become a club for the wealthy; it should give opportunity to as many as possible.

Asking debaters to pay their own way can limit the participation of low-income students. One solution to this problem is to require those who can pay their way to contribute to a fund used to send very worthy students to events.

If a common travel subsidy does not cover all costs, students should solicit funds from donors, friends, and supporters to make up the difference. Programs commonly do this to enable students to attend expensive and far-off events. If you are interested in fund-raising, here's a link to a huge number of ideas, some quite good and some a little extreme: <http://www.fundraiserinsight.org/ideas/>.

## **Keeping Some Social Events at a Distance**

Social activities are important in helping your debate program create interest and camaraderie, but not all may be condoned by your university. There have been some cases where universities have cancelled programs because of inappropriate behavior at what the university considered to be an official club event. To avoid problems, make a clear distinction between official social events and informal gatherings. One easy way to do this is to state that official social events take place on university property; all social events that take place away from university property (even tournaments and training) have no connection with the debate program. Make this a written guideline for you group and, when events are planned, make sure to note in the minutes whether the event is formally connected to the program. One mistake might be extremely detrimental to your program.

## **Conclusion**

Colleges and universities are wonderful places to organize debating activities. They are places where intellectually critical and expressive individuals come together in an atmosphere of learning. Debating societies can make a tremendous contribution to university life and can have profound life-changing effects on those involved. Within a few basic guidelines, this environment is rich soil for a debate society.

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## CHAPTER 13

# Hopes and Dreams

You may have hopes and dreams of creating debating activities, and I wish you all the best. If you are determined to create debating activities where you are, I hope this book will help you make this dream possible. All around the world, people are successfully organizing debating activities and much of what they (and I from them) have learned has been shared here. Of course, your own original ideas will also be important in helping you achieve your goal.

My goal has been to assist you in your endeavor. I have engaged in most of these efforts myself as well as worked with and observed others all around the world. But, I must confess, this book and all of these efforts in more than 40 countries have also had a broader aim. I obviously had a goal in mind when writing this volume: make the world a better place through debating. To conclude, it would be worthwhile to be specific about what this goal entails.

### **The Prize: Visible and Invisible, Present and Future**

As people engage in debate training, we see them change. They become more confident, express themselves with more

precision, identify the weaknesses in ideas, and are willing to understand the nature of disagreement. This happens more for some than for others, but it happens. As trainers and organizers, we see these changes in the short term. But what are the long-term effects of debating? What can we expect from debaters as citizens?

The debater can be an excellent model for the citizen. Debating changes people. Debaters pay more attention to social, economic, and political events, they investigate issues and have opinions based on solid reasoning, they speak out in convincing ways when the time is right, and they serve as opinion leaders for citizens around them. I've seen this transformation from the most neglected schools in New York City to the students teaching each other to debate under a tree in Bangladesh, from young people debating in a dirt floor classroom in rural Chile to the auditorium in the Reagan Center in Washington, D.C. When we train debaters, we are also training responsible citizens for democratic and civil societies.

Oddly enough, it is the obligations to "others" that are a good starting point for thinking about how citizens should treat other citizens. We want citizens to:

- Respect people's rights to freedom of speech and expression.
- Respect opponents and those with whom we disagree.
- Be honest in the use of argumentation and evidence.
- Help those with less experience, because we are all both student and teacher.
- Be an advocate in life, siding with those in need and willing to speak truth to power.

The standards set for how the individual conducts himself or herself in a debate are also fairly useful in outlining what we mean by a responsible citizen.

- Research my topic and know what I am talking about.
- Respect the subject matter of my debates.
- Choose persuasion over coercion and violence.
- Learn from victory and especially from defeat.
- Be a generous winner and a gracious loser.
- Remember and respect where I came even though I am now a citizen of the world.
- Apply my criticism of others to myself.
- Strive to see myself in others.
- In a debate, use the best arguments I can to support the side I am on.
- In life, use the best arguments I can to determine which side I am on.

Individual change also leads to social change. The parts can have enough influence to impact the whole. This happens neither overnight nor suddenly, but it does happen.

When the individual changes begin to accumulate, we have expectations for our broader society. Such a society, deeply influenced by the experience of debating, might involve:

- More informed participation by citizens based on real information about the situation and real arguments about problems and solutions. The pull of vacuous slogans will be diminished as people look at real programs and proposals. They have become accustomed to finding useful information and are then willing to use it.

- More satisfaction with life as people are willing to speak out, eager to be heard, and able to engage with those who disagree. The fundamental human need to be heard and make a difference is better met by a society that has more exposure to debating.
- More vibrancy in local communities as people grapple with local problems and find local answers instead of defaulting to unknown and unknowable global forces or distant national governments.
- Less coercion and violence as people learn to disagree productively, instead of viewing those who disagree as personal enemies. There is less need to intimidate others, threaten others, or even to hurt others in order to resolve issues.
- More willingness to compromise. People begin to understand that all sides may have valid arguments about an issue, and they will work together to find a solution that is acceptable to the largest number of citizens.

Participating in debate demonstrates that verbs are more important than nouns. The verbs are what we do and how we act, individually and as a society. Together, we sing, celebrate, mourn, build, repair, help, remember, and create expectations. Contrast verbs with nouns: objects we obtain and possess. We “have” these things, but we find it hard to share them. As every child who has wished for a certain toy has discovered, once the toy is his, it soon loses its appeal and he begins looking for something else. Nouns don’t bring us together, don’t really make us happy, and only lead us to look for the next “thing” that we think we need. It is the verbs, the singing, repairing, helping, and celebrating that really lead to satisfaction.

In many discussions with young people all around the world I have asked the question, “What really makes you

happy?” The answer is always the same: spending time with family and friends; having meaningful and productive work; enjoying the arts; celebrating special occasions and other verbs. When I then ask them what society tells them they need for them to be happy, the list is quite different: money, cars, fancy clothing, the latest “thing,” and other possessions. A look at modern advertising confirms this bias. We are taught to struggle for that endlessly repeating “toy” when it is something that we cannot enjoy over and over again, that we cannot share with others, and that inevitably leaves us feeling empty. We are happy when we first get that “noun,” but it soon wears off and we are back where we started. The “verb,” on the other hand, keeps on giving satisfaction, whether it is playing with your children, singing, painting a picture, growing a garden, or even having a vigorous discussion with your friends.

Debate is an exercise that connects us fully to the “verbs” in life. We learn the power of ideas, the pleasures of communicating strategically, the wisdom of listening to a good argument by an opponent, the awareness of how complex critical communication operates as we hear judges explain their decisions. Debate teaches the lesson of most “verbs” in that it invites you not just to debate once, but to do so over and over again in a virtuous circle of learning, self-improvement, and joy.

It is the life of action that is worthy of our pursuit, not a life of consumption. Ivan Illich, a thinker who I have come to admire for his insight and bravery, has said,

I believe that a desirable future depends on our deliberately choosing a life of action over a life of consumption, on our engendering a lifestyle which will enable us to be spontaneous, independent, yet related to each other, rather than maintaining a lifestyle which only allows to make

and unmake, produce and consume—a style of life which is merely a way station on the road to the depletion and pollution of the environment. The future depends more upon our choice of institutions which support a life of action than on our developing new ideologies and technologies. (1973, 57)

The joy is in the debate, not in the trophy.

## **How Do We Get There?**

I'm not claiming that debating will solve all of our problems, that debating will make us all love one another, or that debating will end war. I am saying that debating is a very positive step to solving problems and learning to work together. It is a positive step in educating young people to be active in their own educations and to take what they learn into later life. A debating world is not a perfect world, but it is a better world. We have many difficult choices to make in this new century, and we had better make those decisions thoughtfully. As eighteenth-century French essayist Joseph Joubert said: "It is better to debate a question without settling it than to settle a question without debating it."

When we promote debating, we take part in making a better future. Our contribution may be a small part, but it is a part. A classroom of high school students may learn how to debate, and one never knows which student will go on to make a huge difference and what that difference will be. But tools tend to get used and debate is no exception.

## Conclusion

Each of us is a part of this story. Each of us is a part of such a future. Each argument is a small particle of an edifice that might lead to lasting and important changes.

My greatest hope is that this volume can be a small part of this greater effort. I see debate growing and prospering around the world. The time seems right to strike some sparks wherever we can in the hope that it will create additional light. Do your best and trust yourself. As an anonymous hero of mine has said, “Go forward in all your beliefs, and in so doing prove to me that I am not mistaken in mine.”

## References

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# Appendix 1: Debate Formats

## **A Short Guide to Competitive Debate Formats**

Many different competitive debating formats are available. I hope that this very short introduction can assist you in locating the most appropriate format for you and your group.

Find the right format, and then go to the webpage at Debate Central to find the information you need to learn that format—<http://debate.uvm.edu/learndebate.html>

First, select the level at which you hope to compete, university or schools.

### **UNIVERSITY-LEVEL COMPETITION**

- Asians Format AUDC, NEAO, Asia only
- Australs Australasian format, Australasian only
- CUSID Canada only
- NFA Lincoln-Douglas, USA only
- NPDA/APDA American Parliamentary Debate, USA only
- Policy Debate CEDA, NDT, USA only
- WUDC/BP World Universities Debating Championship



## **SCHOOL-LEVEL COMPETITION**

- High School Public Debate Program
- Karl Popper Debate
- Lincoln-Douglas Debate, USA only
- Middle School Public Debate Program
- Policy Debate, USA only
- Public Forum Debate, USA only
- WSDC World Schools Debating Championship

Second, see which format you prefer or find out what format your group participates in. A short description of each format follows.

## **UNIVERSITY-LEVEL COMPETITION**

### **WUDC/BP—World's**

- Topics: New topic for each debate. Topics tend to be specific.
- Teams: Teams of 2, 4 teams in one debate, 2 proposition, 2 opposition, and judges rank teams 1–4.
- Length: 60 minutes.
- Preparation: 15 minutes before the debate, no electronic access, only talk to partner.
- Interaction: Points of information from one side to the other.

- Content: Usually no quoted material. Very few procedural or definitional arguments.
- Style: Faster than normal delivery, but accessible to all people.
- Events: Worlds, Euros, Asians, Pan Africans, U.S., etc.
- Links:

Debaters: <http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Berlin%20Briefing%201%20-%20Debating%20at%20the%20WUDC%20Berlin%202013.pdf>

Judges: <http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Berlin%20Briefing%202%20-%20Adjudication%20at%20the%20WUDC%20Berlin%202013.pdf>

Novices [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Berlin%20Briefing%203%20-%20The%20British%20Parliamentary%20Format%20\(for%20Novices\).pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Berlin%20Briefing%203%20-%20The%20British%20Parliamentary%20Format%20(for%20Novices).pdf)

### **NPDA/APDA—American Parliamentary**

- Topics: New topic for each debate. Topic more binding for NPDA than APDA.
- Teams: Teams of 2, 2 teams, proposition and opposition.
- Length: 45 minutes.
- Preparation: 20–30 minutes open preparation.
- Interaction: Points of information.
- Content: No quoted material.
- Style: Some jargon, some procedural arguments,
- Events: NPDA tournaments, NPTE, APDA tournaments.

- Links:

APDA rules: <http://www.apdaweb.org/guide/rules>

NPDA rules: <http://www.parlidebate.org/npda-rules/>

### **Policy Debate—Cross-examination**

- Topics: One topic for entire academic year.
- Teams: Teams of 2, 2 teams, affirmative and negative.
- Length: 2-2.5 hours.
- Preparation: Intense preparation during the entire year, extensive research. Ten minutes preparation time to be used by each team during the debate.
- Interaction: Cross-examination.
- Content: Lots of quoted material, lots of jargon, many procedural arguments, but very open to innovation if you can defend it.
- Style: Usually very rapid delivery.
- Events: NDT, CEDA tournaments.
- Link: [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Code\\_2008.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Code_2008.pdf)

### **Asian—Asian Parliamentary**

- Topics: Three topics before each debate, teams determine which to debate.
- Teams: Teams of 3, 2 teams, government and opposition.
- Length: About one hour.
- Preparation: 30 minutes.
- Interaction: Points of information.

- Content: Usually no quoted material.
- Style: A little faster than conversational, but understandable by all.
- Events: UADC
- Links: <http://parliamentarydebate.blogspot.com/2007/08/asian-parliamentary-debate.html>

### **AUSTRALS**

- Topics: Three topics before each debate, teams determine which to debate.
- Teams: Teams of 3, 2 teams, proposition and opposition.
- Length: About one hour.
- Preparation: 30 minutes.
- Interaction: Points of information.
- Content: Usually no quoted material.
- Style: A little faster than conversational, but understandable by all.
- Events: Australian tournaments, Australasians.
- Links: [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/quinn\\_DEBATING.pdf?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=20&Itemid=38](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/quinn_DEBATING.pdf?option=com_content&task=view&id=20&Itemid=38)

### **CUSID—Canadian Parliamentary**

- Topics: 30 minutes before the debate, but topic is very loosely interpreted.
- Teams: Teams of 2, 2 teams, government and opposition.

- Length: Less than 60 minutes.
- Preparation: Most preparation done before the tournament.
- Interaction: Points of information.
- Content: Usually no quoted material.
- Style: A little faster than conversational, but understandable by all.
- Events: CUSID tournaments.
- Links: [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/cusid\\_central\\_debating\\_guide.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/cusid_central_debating_guide.pdf)

### **NFA LD—College LD**

- Topics: One topic for the entire academic year. Mostly topics about policy issues
- Teams: Teams of 1, 2 teams, affirmative and negative.
- Length: About 45 minutes.
- Preparation: Intense preparation and research during the year.
- Interaction: Cross-examination.
- Content: Quoted material, prepared arguments.
- Style: Appeals to an audience of average citizens.
- Events: NFA tournaments.
- Links: <http://www.nationalforensics.org/lincoln-douglas-debate>

## **HIGH SCHOOL–LEVEL COMPETITION**

### **WSDC World Schools Debating Championship**

- Topics: Mix of prepared and extemporaneous topics.
- Teams: Teams of 3, 2 teams, affirmative/proposition and negative/opposition.
- Length: One hour.
- Preparation: Significant pre-tournament preparation for prepared motions, 1 hour preparation for extemporaneous motions with no outside help except for almanac and dictionary.
- Interaction: Points of information.
- Content: Usually no quoted material.
- Style: Faster than normal conversation, but understandable by all.
- Events: World Schools Debating Championship, Asian Schools Debating Championship, various tournaments.
- Links: <http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/wsdcrules.pdf>

### **Karl Popper Debate IDEA**

- Topics: Announced, usually one month in advance.
- Teams: Teams of 3, 2 teams, affirmative and negative.
- Length: 45 minutes.
- Preparation: Significant preparation before the debate.
- Interaction: Cross-examination.

- Content: Quoted material allowed, but must be able to document sources.
- Style: Accessible to all.
- Events: IDEA Youth Forum, IDEA-affiliated tournaments.
- Links: [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/KPDRules\\_Mead.com.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/KPDRules_Mead.com.pdf)

### **Policy Debate, USA only**

- Topics: One topic for the entire academic year, concerns question of government policy.
- Teams: Teams of 2, 2 teams, affirmative and negative.
- Length: 90 minutes.
- Preparation: Significant preparation and research during the year. Eight minutes preparation time for each team to be used during the debate.
- Interaction: Cross-examination.
- Content: Substantial quoted material, procedural arguments, considerable jargon.
- Style: Very fast delivery.
- Events: NFL tournaments, Tournament of Champions, NDCA championships.
- Links: [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Code\\_2008.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Code_2008.pdf)

### **Lincoln-Douglas Debate, USA only**

- Topics: Value topics announced in advance.
- Teams: Teams of 1, 2 teams, affirmative and negative.

- Length: 35 minutes.
- Preparation: Topics announced in advance. Three minutes preparation time for each side during the debate.
- Interaction: Cross-examination.
- Content: Very little quoted material.
- Style: Accessible to all, but faster than conversation
- Events: NFL, ToC, NDCA.
- Links: [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/LDIntroduction\\_to\\_LD\\_Debate\\_\(NFL\).pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/LDIntroduction_to_LD_Debate_(NFL).pdf)

### **Public Forum Debate, USA only**

- Topics: Announced in advance. Topics of current popular interest.
- Teams: Teams of 2, 2 teams, pro and con, sides determined by coin flip at beginning, loser of flip can decide to speak first or second.
- Length: 35 minutes.
- Preparation: Significant preparation before the debate, 2 minutes of preparation time for each team to use during the debate.
- Interaction: Crossfire, debaters take turns asking questions.
- Content: Some quoted material but debate should not be driven by it.
- Style: Accessible to all.
- Events: NFL tournaments, ToC, NDCA



Debaters Guide: <http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/PFNFL.pdf>

Judging Guide: [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/NFL\\_PF\\_judging.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/NFL_PF_judging.pdf)

For more information, please go to Debate Central at <http://debate.uvm.edu/learndebate.html> and click on resources for the format you are interested in.

IDEA has produced a very short summary of different debate formats at <http://idebate.org/about/debate/formats>

Formats are fluid and changing, thus some details given here may be different for different tournaments and organizations.

This is not a comprehensive listing, as many new debate formats are constantly being born. These, however, are the most common debate formats.

## Appendix 2: Online Resources

### Texts

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Da Cunha, Ary Ferreira. *How to Start a Debate Society: A Brief Guide*. New York: International Debate Education Association, 2013. [http://idebate.org/sites/live/files/HT%20Start%20A%20Debate%20Society\\_final.pdf](http://idebate.org/sites/live/files/HT%20Start%20A%20Debate%20Society_final.pdf)

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Johnson, Steve. *Winning Debates*. New York: IDEBATE Press, 2009. <http://idebate.org/sites/live/files/9781932716511.pdf>

Louden, Allan. *Navigating Opportunity: Policy Debate in the 21st Century*. New York: IDEBATE Press. 2010

Meany, John, and Kate Shuster. *Art, Argument and Advocacy*. New York: IDEBATE Press, 2002. <http://idebate.org/sites/live/files/Art-arg-advoc-webready.pdf>

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## **JOURNALS AND MAGAZINES**

*Contemporary Argumentation & Debate*.  
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*Controversia.*

<http://idebate.org/publications/128>

*iDebate Magazine.*

<http://idebate.org/publications/130>

*Monash Debating Review.*

2005, <http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/MDR%202005.pdf>

2006, <http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/MDR%202006.pdf>

2007, <http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/MDR%202007.pdf>

2008, (not available on line)

2009, <http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/MDR%202009.pdf>

2010, [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/mdr\\_edition8.pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/mdr_edition8.pdf)

2011 <http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/MDR%202011.pdf>

National Forensic League, *Rostrum Magazine.*

<http://www.nationalforensicleague.org/asp/pubs/rostrum.aspx?navid=35&pnavid=179>

## **VIDEO SERIES**

American Parliamentary Debate.

<http://debate.uvm.edu/parlivid.html>

Asian Parliamentary Debate.

<http://debate.uvm.edu/asianvideo.html>

Comprehensive Survey of Argumentation, Persuasion, Public Speaking, and Debating.

<http://debate.uvm.edu/critadv.html>

Debate Association, Singapore.

<http://www.debates.org.sg/?cat=40>

Debate Central.

<http://www.uvm.edu/~debate/watch/>

Debate Video.

<http://debatevideoblog.blogspot.com/>

Karl Popper Debate.

<http://www.youtube.com/> and search for “Karl Popper Debate”

Learn Lincoln-Douglas Debate.

<http://debate.uvm.edu/learnld.html>

Middle School Public Debate Program, Video Resources.

<http://www.middledebate.com/resources/videoresources.html>

National Forensic League Final Rounds.

<http://nfltv.org/category/final-rounds/>

Policy Debate Videos.

<http://debate.uvm.edu/policyvideo.html>

<http://debate.uvm.edu/policyvid.html>

<http://nfltv.org/category/policy-debate/>

Public Forum Debate.

<http://nfltv.org/category/public-forum/>

World Schools Debating Championship Videos.

<http://debate.uvm.edu/wscdvideo.html>

World Schools Debating Championship Format Videos.

<http://debate.uvm.edu/wudcvideo.html>

World Universities Debating Championship Format Videos  
in Spanish.

<https://vimeo.com/channels/227739>

## **AUDIO SERIES**

Download these files and listen to them on any MP3 player.

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Cimerman, Maja. "Debating as an ESL/EFL Speaker," 2011.  
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[http://debate.uvm.edu/low\\_bandwidth/WSDC/low\\_introwsdc2011.mp3](http://debate.uvm.edu/low_bandwidth/WSDC/low_introwsdc2011.mp3)

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<http://debate.uvm.edu/low.html>

England-Kerr, Anna. "Debating About International Human Rights," 2010.  
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[http://debate.uvm.edu/low\\_bandwidth/Genl/low\\_langart2011.mp3](http://debate.uvm.edu/low_bandwidth/Genl/low_langart2011.mp3)

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## Appendix 3: Brackets for Elimination Debates

These are established according to conventions as well as according to the way other competitions build brackets to determine who faces whom.

Teams are seeded into these brackets and then they advance. If the #2 team is defeated by a #3 team, for example, the #3 team assumes the place of the #2 team in the bracket.

### Brackets for When Two Teams Are in One Debate

#### **FOUR-TEAM BRACKET**

Semifinals

1-4

2-3

Finals (assuming higher ranked advances)

1-2

#### **EIGHT-TEAM BRACKET**

Quarterfinals

1-8

2-7

3–6

4–5

Semifinals (assuming higher ranked advances)

1–4

2–3

Finals

1–2

### **SIXTEEN-TEAM BRACKET**

Octafinals

1–16

2–15

3–14

4–13

5–12

6–11

7–10

8–9

Quarterfinals (assuming higher ranked advances)

1–8

2–7

3–6

4–5

Semifinals

1–4

2–3

Finals

1–2

### **THIRTY-TWO TEAM BRACKET**

Double Octafinals

- 1-32
- 2-31
- 3-30
- 4-29
- 5-28
- 6-27
- 7-26
- 8-25
- 9-24
- 10-23
- 11-22
- 12-21
- 13-20
- 14-19
- 15-18
- 16-17

Octafinals (assuming higher ranked advances)

- 1-16
- 2-15
- 3-14
- 4-13
- 5-12
- 6-11
- 7-10
- 8-9

Quarterfinals

- 1-8
- 2-7
- 3-6
- 4-5

Semifinals

- 1-4

2-3

Finals

1-2

## **Brackets for When Four Teams Are in One Debate (WUDC Format)**

### **EIGHT-TEAM BRACKET**

Semifinals

1-8-4-5

2-7-3-6

Finals (assuming that two teams advance from each debate, both the higher-seeded teams)

1-2-3-4

### **SIXTEEN-TEAM BRACKET**

Quarterfinals

1-16-8-9

4-13-5-12

2-15-7-10

3-14-6-11

Semifinals (assuming that two teams advance, both the higher seeded teams)

1-8-4-5

2-7-3-6

Finals (assuming that two teams advance, both the higher seeded teams)

1-2-3-4

## **THIRTY-TWO TEAM BRACKET**

Octafinals

1-16-17-32

2-15-18-31

3-14-19-30

4-13-20-29

5-12-21-28

6-11-22-27

7-10-23-26

8-9-24-25

Quarterfinals (assuming that two teams advance, both the higher-seeded teams)

1-16-8-9

4-13-5-12

2-15-7-10

3-14-6-11

Semifinals (assuming that two teams advance, both the higher-seeded teams)

1-8-4-5

2-7-3-6

Finals (assuming that two teams advance, both the higher-seeded teams)

1-2-3-4