SPEECH & DEBATE

SFAC FY16 Questionnaire

Executive Summary

Our mission is to create student success by means of competitive excellence in Speech & Debate.

The program accomplishes this mission by:

> Facilitating high-quality intercollegiate tournament competition for UH students,
> Expanding the reach of Speech & Debate as a resource for all students,
> Building on a tradition of success in Speech & Debate competition,
> Supporting informed and balanced public discussion on ideas that matter,
> Equipping students with the tools necessary to advocate and engage in the world.

Why Speech & Debate?

Competition is the foundation of our program because Speech & Debate is a remarkably effective way to harness competitive drive in the service of co-curricular student success. For instance, intercollegiate competition creates positive educational outcomes including: critical thinking, communication, research, and teamwork. Competition also teaches resilience and drives students to think creatively and innovate in the face of real world challenges. The commitment to deliberate practice required to win is an invaluable asset to students in our fast-paced, low-attention society. As such, Speech and Debate uniquely facilitates student success.

All UH students and welcome to compete, regardless of prior experience. In fact, we work to make sure that anyone who wants to participate can join the team. One of our coaching positions is entirely dedicated to the task of teaching "novice" debaters because we believe that Speech & Debate is so valuable to student success that it should be shared with as many students as possible, and not just with a select few students.

Program Background

Intercollegiate policy debate competition began at the University of Houston in 1949. Notably, UH was an early leader in the formative years of intercollegiate debate producing top scholars of argument theory and producing innovative debate pedagogy.

UH has also been a strong competitor in collegiate speech competition (individual events). However, active debate competition due to a complex set of factors stopped in the late 1970s. In response to support from alumni and local debate educators, in 2012 Policy Debate competition restarted, housed in the Honors College. Speech competition, under the aegis of UHFS (Forensic Society), had been revived beginning in the late 1990s.

With support from SFAC, DSAES and the Honors College, in FY14 the Speech and Debate programs were joined to create a unified program, housed in the Honors College in partnership with DSAES. The transition has been a success, but the ultimate goals and outcomes will require continued focus and support.

Tradition of Success

24 NDT qualifications

2nd place 1969

3rd place 1970

3 top Individual Speakers
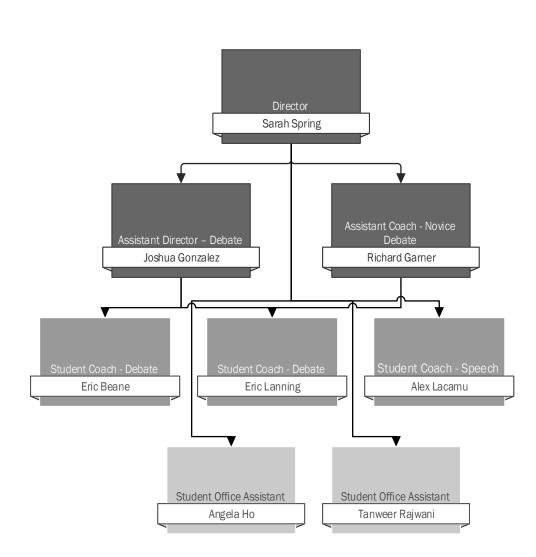
2013-2014 Accomplishments

In the past year, UH students have had extraordinary competitive success, which will be reviewed in detail in later parts of this report. A few highlights:

Quarterfinalist (5th place) at the National Debate Tournament, i.e. Collegiate Championship for debate.
Finalist (2nd place) at the Lafayette Debates and winner of Study Tour to France.
Champion of the Texas-Dallas and North Texas Debate Tournaments.

Organizational Chart

FIGURE 1

Director
Sarah Spring

Assistant Director – Debate
Joshua Gonzalez

Assistant Coach - Novice Debate
Richard Garner

Student Coach - Debate
Eric Beane

Student Coach - Debate
Eric Lanning

Student Coach - Speech
Alex Lacamu

Student Office Assistant
Angela Ho

Student Office Assistant
Tanweer Rajwani

FY14 Strategic Initiatives

The Speech & Debate program did not have an FY14 2013-2014 request (see Question 5), but in the academic year 2013-2014 the program's goals were very much in line with the continuing goals identified in last year's FY15 request.

In the FY15 request there were 3 primary initiatives:

Competitive Excellence

Increase competitive success at National and regional Speech & Debate tournaments. The program met or exceeded 2 of the 3 goals intended for 2015 in the last year. This goal directly relates to the University goal of national competitiveness, the UH & DSA goal of student success by creating student engagement and the DSA goal of providing co-curricular student experience.

Expand Competitive Opportunities
UH students will have 1000 Substantial Competitive Instances.[1]

UH students competed in **1,014** particular Speech and Debate rounds in 2013-2014

Competitive Success
Qualify to compete at the National Debate Tournament (NDT) and the American Forensics Association (AFA) National Tournament (Speech/Individual Events).

UH qualified to compete at the 2014 **NDT** and finished **5th** overall at this championship tournament in 2014. We did not qualify to AFA, but are working on qualifying in 2015.

Academic Excellence

The co-curricular partnership of academic and student programs to enable students to succeed in classes and after graduation. This initiative supports the Student Success goals of both the University at large and DSAES and the DSAES Global Learning initiative (see Lafayette Debates, below).

Public Debates
Plan and participate in public debates on contemporary issues.

In 2013-2014, UH hosted a public debate with the British National Team, Rice and TSU. In addition, students participated in two high profile public debate competitions.

- **The Lafayette Debates,** sponsored by George Washington University and the Embassy of France, at this public debate tournament UH students were finalists and won a study tour in France, hosted by the French government.

- **The Madison Cup**, sponsored by James Madison University, where UH again reached the finals and students won scholarships.

Academic Support
Co-curricular programming and support for debate and speech to expand advocacy resources for students.

Community Engagement

Support the Houston Urban Debate (HUDL)
In FY14, the Speech & Debate Program worked strenuously to support the Houston Urban Debate League by mentoring HUDL students, hosting a seminar on campus (~350 HUDL students in attendance) and by hosting the HUDL Summer Institute on campus.

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[1] In the FY15 request called "substantial debate instances." Accounts for both team competition (2-person policy debate teams) and individual events. Substantial here means that the tournament event in which they are competing has at least 10 entries.

Assessment

We have employed multiple metrics for conducting assessments of our success in meeting the goals of our program and needs of our students. Broadly speaking, we attempt to measure and benchmark in a few areas which are related to the strategic initiatives from FY15 (see above): participation, competitive success, student success and impact. We will measure these both as absolute values and year-to-year improvements, in comparison to a broader community of peer and aspirant universities (where data is available).
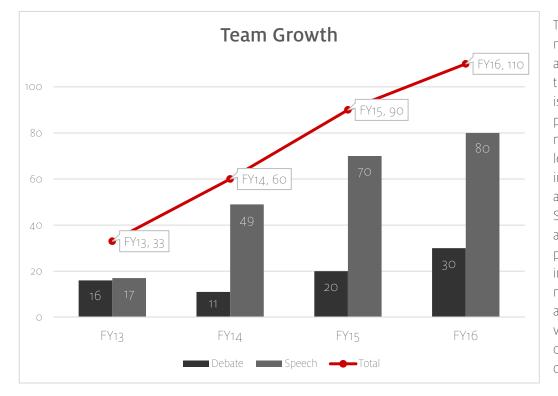
Strategic Initiative Progress

Competitive Excellence

Participation Growth

Sustainable and intentional growth is part of our programs core mission and was a particular goal in the past year. In particular, finding ways to grow both Speech (formerly UHFS) and Debate competitive opportunities was challenging, but the trajectory is promising.

FIGURE 2

This chart[2] represents the number of students who are affiliated in some capacity with the program. While competition is a substantial element of the program's student activities, many students have different levels of competitive involvement, based on their availability each semester. Students who might not be able to travel participate in the program in many ways, for instance by attending team meetings, contributing to argument development or by volunteering with our many community engagement opportunities.
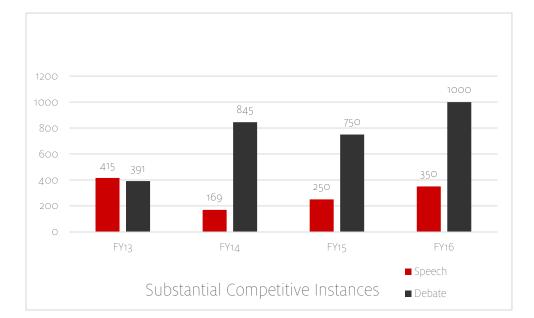
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[2] Data was gathered from team records.

Substantial Debate Instances

The next metric of success is the amount of rounds in which students are competing. We can measure this in two ways: 1) overall rounds in which a UH student competed –"Substantial Competitive Instances." 2) By evaluating the distribution of competitive rounds as divided among those students. [3]

FIGURE 3

	Speech	Debate	Total
FY13	415	391	806
FY14	169	845	1014
FY15	250	750	1000
FY16	350	1000	1350

Competitive Success

Competitive success is a straightforward data point, given that each competitive instance is evaluated by a third-party judge for all of our events. There are, however, more or less valuable wins, based on strength of competition, prestige or other metrics.[4] The Speech and Debate Program reached levels of achievement not witnessed since the program's heyday in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Most prominently, the team of Eric Lanning (Sr., The Woodlands) and Tanweer Rajwani (So., Sugar Land) finished 5th at the National Debate Tournament, the premier end-of-year national championship tournament in intercollegiate debate. Lanning and Rajwani also won both the University of North Texas and University of Texas at Dallas tournaments. Speech team members Joshua Freed (Fr., Cypress) and Brendon Martinez (Fr., Richmond) reached the semifinals and quarterfinals of their respective events at Pi Kappa Delta nationals. Last, but certainly not least, Eric Lanning and Danny Alexander (Jr., Katy) were runners-up at the inaugural Lafayette Debates, sponsored and hosted by the Embassy of the Republic of France in Washington, D.C., as a result, they earned the chance to be part of a 10-day study tour of France as guests of the French government.

Student Success & Impact

In addition to their competitive successes, the members of the UH Speech and Debate Program maintained their studies and worked to complete degrees. Program graduates from 2014 are currently enrolled in multiple law schools, professional schools, and PhD programs around the country.

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[3] Data from team records and www.tabroom.com (debate)

[4] Given the range of events and divisions in which we compete, comparing the value of any given win or loss is difficult. There are some agreed upon evaluative standards, such as historical success of opponents, the number of entries, or other less subjective measures.

Quantitative Measurement: NSSE

In order to provide a more quantitative measure of student success and performance by SDP members, we have undertaken a data gathering initiative this year, centered on the administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Two important pieces of data will be available as a result of this survey: First, we will be able to effectively track improvements (or declines) in the level of engagement of students that occur over the course of a given year, using a pre/post survey administration system. Students are first surveyed in mid-October and again at the end of the academic year. Given the substantial number of students who participate in SDP, we have a reasonable degree of confidence that this measure will have sufficient power to detect the presence of a significant correlation between student engagement and participation in SDP (or its absence). Insofar as NSSE measures "empirically confirmed 'good practices' in undergraduate education [that] . . . reflect behaviors by students and institutions that are associated with desired outcomes of college."[5] In addition, the data generated by NSSE administration will allow for the comparison of the engagement level of UH SDP members with broader demographic groups, such as UH Honors students, the UH student body as a whole, and with students at peer and aspirant institutions beyond UH.

Student Support and Qualitative Measurement

Members of the Speech and Debate Program faculty are also part of the Honors College Faculty Advising Network (FAN) pilot program. The FAN pairs members of the Honors College faculty with students in need of assistance, in an effort to support student success and retention. FAN creates a system of early academic alerts and proactive advising to help connect underachieving and at-risk students with various campus resources to help resolve the challenges that these students face.

Participation in FAN (of which staff are members and advisors) provides students on the team not only access to academic advising, but direction, advising, and coordination of the various resources on campus available to support student success and health. In addition, it allows the faculty and staff a liaison to facilitate closer contact with the faculty instructing the many students engaged with SDP.

Peer Institutions
Comparison to peers in Speech & Debate happens in many ways. Each individual round could potentially be understood as evaluating progress versus peer competitors. The sheer volume of these rounds and their variability based on particular factors in each instance makes evaluation difficult. But there are a number of season long metrics that can help assess the performance of the program versus our peers.

Benchmarks – Policy Debate
The National Debate Tournament compiles a season-long national ranking that considers the performance of teams at all sanctioned tournaments. The schools chosen for this comparison are those that are both members of the National Debate Tournament and have been identified by the University as State and National Peer Competitors.[6] Many of these peer programs are well-established, long running programs. The performance of the policy debate team in comparison to these competitors is remarkable. See **FIGURE 4.**

The data also demonstrates areas of focus and excellence. George Mason, for instance, was ranked first in overall NDT standings, because of their success across all divisions of competition (Novice, Junior Varsity and Varsity). Oklahoma was very successful by nearly all measures. UH's performance improved substantially at the National championship tournament because of the hard-work and perseverance of our students.

5 National Study of Student Engagement, Accessed October, 10, 2014 http://nsse.iub.edu/html/about.cfm
6 University of Houston Progress Card 2012- State and National Peer Institution Report http://www.uhsa.uh.edu/chancellor/planning-and-performance/strategic-documents/UH%20Peer%20Institution%20Report%202012.pdf

FIGURE 4

School	NDT Year-End Rank	NDT Rank - Varsity	Championship Tournament Finish[7]
University of Oklahoma	3	1	3
University of Houston	30	24	5
Wayne State	28	18	17
University of Texas-Austin	15	8	30
University of North Texas	51	38	39
University of Texas-Dallas	53	40	48
Arizona State	45	42	49
George Mason	1	24	68
University of Texas-San Antonio	27	35	

Benchmarks – Speech

At the comparable national championship for Speech, the American Forensics Association National Individual Events Tournament (AFA-NIET), UH peer institutions are very strong competitors. See **FIGURE 5.** Our goal for FY15 is to qualify to compete at this tournament, we did not qualify in 2014. Additionally, data on speech competition is comparatively limited and there is no comparable standing metric that evaluates year-long performance. Results in speech are not published publically and are often difficult to procure. Regardless, the following chart demonstrates the performance of peer institutions at the AFA-NIET.

FIGURE 5

School	Sweepstakes Rank AFA-NIET
University of Texas-Austin	3
George Mason	5
Arizona State	16
Texas State University-San Marcos	30
Texas A&M University	50
University of Texas-El Paso	68
University of Houston	
University of Oklahoma	

Changes since FY15 Request

The primary changes since the FY15 request have been the growth and success of the team, particularly following the merger of UHFS and the Policy Debate team. In the FY15 request, we had planned to hire a speech coach who would share an appointment in Honors as a lecturer. Unfortunately, the staffing needs in Honors did not coincide with this need and the part-time level of funding would not have been sufficient to hire a coach (~$10,000/year) who would have met the demanding needs of the team.

> Question 5
>
> Budget or Organizational Changes since FY15 request

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7 Georgetown won the 2014 National Debate Tournament and Michigan was the runner-up.

Rather, the program has employed undergraduate student-coaches who have provided a limited, but valiant, level of student instruction. The use of student-coaches is ultimately a stop-gap measure that is not sustainable over the long-term because of the inability to assign undergraduates to tasks that include travel supervision, administrative decisions and coaching instruction, all of which require dedicated professional support.

We have also used third-party judges to cover tournament commitments and even as consultants in some instances to cover staffing shortfalls. A FY15 OT request (separate) to increase travel funding will help address this gap in the short-term by allowing the team to travel a broader array of students in the absence of a permanent coach.

FY16 Strategic Initiatives

Competitive Excellence

The Debate & Advocacy program will seek to achieve competitive success at National and regional Debate & Forensics tournaments. These competitive opportunities will be available for students at all levels of debate or speech experience. By building upon the strong academic foundation available to University of Houston students, the program will aim to consistently succeed at the highest competitive levels, particularly against Top-Tier Research Universities.

Action Steps
1. Continue sustainable participation and growth of team members. Goal – 110 team members (cf. FIGURE 2)

2. Expand competitive opportunities for students. Goal – 1350 Substantial Competitive Instances (cf FIGURE 3)

3. Increase competitive success in Speech (individual events) by employing a Speech Coach.

Academic Excellence

The co-curricular partnership of academic and student programs will enable students to succeed in the classes and after graduation. Additionally, the program will create active student engagement across the campus by prompting students to engage in intellectual questions, debates and discussion.

Action Steps
1. Implement robust advising and academic support in collaboration with Honors College and University faculty.

2. Engage the broader university committee by supporting engaging intellectual issues through public debates.

Community Engagement

Build strong community support for Speech & Debate education through a variety of outreach and engaged-learning initiatives. Debate is a particularly important skill for many students, particularly those at-risk. The Houston Urban Debate League (HUDL) has worked to build a growing non-profit education resource for students in HISD. Debate outreach from the University of Houston will support debate as a premier pathway to college in partnership with the HUDL.

1. Continue to support the HUDL and expand collaboration in supporting their capacity as a non-profit educational institution to support debate in Houston.

2. Support local debate education, including HUDL and beyond, by creating programming and materials for debate instruction.

Additional Funding

Support for administration, faculty salaries, some travel expenses, and operational expenses that do not directly support student activities are largely funded through Academic Affairs and the Honors College.

The program is also working on advancement and development to provide an opportunity to develop future financial support through corporate partnerships and private giving from alumni and friends of speech and debate.

Similar Services

To our knowledge, there are no similar student activities in the University. The unification of UHFS and Policy Debate has created a home for Speech and Debate competition at UH in our program. [8]

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8 While some functions will be in an academic unit, the program falls within the MAPP definition of student services:
  11.03.01: Student services, under this statute, cover textbook rentals; recreational activities; health, hospital, and other medical services; group hospitalization; intramural and intercollegiate athletics; artists and lecture series and other cultural entertainment; debating and oratorical activities; student publications; student government; student fees advisory committees; student transportation services; and any other student activities and services specifically authorized and approved by the Board, except those authorized by any other section of the Education Code.