

FY24 SFAC Base Augmentation

Speech & Debate

10/13/2022

Rationale

Speech & Debate has grown beyond the ability to be sustained by its current budget. In FY22 the program was the largest program of its kind in the country, with only two other peer programs coming close to its size. As of the start of FY23 the policy debate team has grown even larger still. Maintaining this size at the end of FY22 required external support, with the Honors College volunteering one-time support for the program to attend the end of year CEDA National Championship in Fairfax, VA, where UH Debaters were crowned national champions in Novice debate (winning first and second place), and where the top-performing Varsity team was ranked 5th overall in the country. Maintaining this size of program from the current base allocation will present insurmountable hurdles when it comes to future years as tournaments stop offering online participation as coping mechanisms for COVID-19, forcing a return to in-person travel and the myriad costs associated therein.

Conversely, increasing the base allocation will allow the team to continue its path of growth which will enable it to unlock economies of scale to reduce per capita costs for travel. As it stands the team is on the cusp of being able to economically charter coach buses and to reserve large scale hotel room blocks when traveling. However, with a flat budget line or, worse, a decreased budget the team will need to reduce participation numbers and as a result, for the detriment of all involved.

Expense	Amount	Comment
Coaching	\$10,000	Graduate Assistantship for Legal Debate, Remote Coaching for Policy
Travel—Speech & Debate	\$46,400	Support for expanded travel for Speech, Legal Debate, and Policy.
Administrative Fee	\$3,600	
Total	\$60,000	

Coaching

This position would be deployed either to help the new legal debate division or reboot the speech program, if accompanied by additional money for travel. Either role would be tasked with supporting the Cougar Classic and Houston Debate Mentorship Collaborative. The preferred use would be toward a Graduate Assistantship in conjunction with either the theater department (for speech) or UH Law School (for legal debate), taking advantage of local talent while also allowing the funding to do double-duty for university students. Filling staffing positions, especially on a part-time or graduate-assistantship basis is one of the most challenging administrative problems for the program. Filling the position without certainty about future funding has been difficult, and it may require a permanent base-augmentation to facilitate this goal.

Travel Expenses

Travel budgeting depends on a number of variables that change depending on the level of competition, distance, and many other factors. On average, costs are lower for smaller regional tournaments and larger nationally competitive tournaments tend to be further away. The majority of this money would go toward the cost of transporting and housing additional team members who might currently be denied the opportunity for travel next year if budget allocations remain the same. This would also cover the costs of tournament registration, hiring judges to cover tournament obligations (which is quickly becoming one of the largest cost centers for a team of our size), and whatever additional tournament costs would accompany. The following chart gives an example of a standard tournament outlay:

Example Debate Tournament Expense Outlay

Category	Days	Rate	Units	Sub Total
Lodging	3	\$114.00	8	\$2,736.00
Lodging - On Drive	1	\$85.00	8	\$680.00
Food – Students	4	\$15.00	24	\$1,440.00
Food – Coaches			2	\$120.00
Fees		\$60.00	24	\$1,440.00
Judging		\$300.00	4	\$1,200.00
Gas				\$250.00
Ground Transportation				\$600.00
			Total	\$8,476.00