HIGH SCHOOL OUTREACH REPORT 2018-2019

The John R. Park Debate Society is housed in the Department of Communication and has been a campus organization since 1869. We are a member of the National Parliamentary Debate Association and the National Forensic Association (NFA). This broad range of competitive affiliations positions us as a unique forensics program in the PAC-12. In addition to our competitive activities, the team’s signature contribution is our public outreach efforts. In addition to public debates each semester, our team pursues outreach by providing support to local high schools. This outreach service is aimed at expanding and supporting opportunities to participate in forensics in Utah high schools. The students and teachers with whom we work and the contact hours we provide (over 6000 hours since 2010) help support local high schools (both directly and indirectly) where students’ opportunities to participate in forensics are limited or unavailable.

1. Why Outreach?

The John R. Park Debate Society has situated high school outreach as a key element of our program because we are committed to the transformational educational outcomes created through forensics participation. According to a recent study by the National Association of Urban Debate Leagues (urbandebate.org), a leading high school debate outreach organization, training in forensics supports a range of benefits for students. Among their findings, they conclude that students who debate in high school:

- Are 70% more likely to graduate than their non-debating peers
- Are 3 times less likely to drop out than their non-debating peers
- Are 70% more likely to reach the ACT College Ready reading benchmark
- Score 25% higher on college-level literacy tests
- Are likely to attend a four year college or university (75% of debate participants attend a four-year institution of higher education)

Similarly, other research by Dr. Gordon Mitchell, former Director of Forensics at the University of Pittsburgh, concludes that debate provides a pivotal means through which students: gain confidence in their ability to participate as active, civic-minded citizens; learn the principles of open and fair debate that are critical to a healthy democracy; and, develop the abilities to evaluate political discourse encountered in everyday life. And, the National Speech and Debate Association confirms the role of debate in training effective political leaders, noting that a majority of members of U.S. Congress are former participants in forensics.
2. **High School Outreach Program Overview**

Our high school outreach program includes several components aimed at providing a comprehensive set of supports for the Utah high school speech and debate community. Among the services we offer are:

A. **Coaching & Judging**

Each year we provide volunteer coaching and judging for local high schools and the tournaments they attend. This service is valuable to many individual schools and to the larger high school forensics community. Schools with newer forensics programs often do not have experienced teachers or forensics alumni from which to recruit judges. Schools with limited financial resources do not have the funds to pay teachers or judges. And, there are many schools that do not have coaches or judges with experience in all of the events that interest their students. Judging shortages often leave schools unable to attend tournaments or unable to allow their students to compete in a broader range of events. We are able to help address this problem in the high school forensics community by providing free, experienced, independent judges and coaches.

B. **Workshops**

In October 2013, the John R. Park Debate Society added to its outreach program and efforts by implementing and hosting bi-annual forensics workshops for high school students on the University of Utah’s main campus. These workshops were designed to offer access to forensics coaching, evidence and materials, and a supportive environment for underserved students in the local high school forensics community. Undergraduate members of the John R. Park Debate Society engage with service learning in the workshops by coaching, teaching and interacting with the high school students in group and one-on-one contexts. These workshops are held in October and February each year.

C. **Beehive Bonanza**

The John R. Park Debate Society supports the high school forensics community by hosting an annual high school tournament, the Beehive Bonanza, every October. In October 2018, 48 schools and 760 high school students from Utah and three other states attended the tournament. In addition to hosting the tournament, the John R. Park Debate Society awards scholarships to the tournament’s top competitors who choose to attend the University and join our program.

D. **The Beehive Forensics Institute**

Another element of our high school outreach efforts is the Beehive Forensics Institute. In July 2018, The John R. Park Debate Society hosted 114 high school students and coaches from around the country, at the eighth annual BFI. The institute offers an intensive two-week program in which award-winning college and high school coaches provide individualized training for high school debate students. The BFI boasts: a nationally-recognized staff, a low student to faculty ratio (approx. 8:1), University of Utah college credit, a curriculum designed to offer a “signature” college experience, competitive pricing compared to other university-supported camps, a safe, urban environment, and “Olympic” amenities.
E. Utah Tournament of Excellence

The John R. Park Debate Society inaugurated a new forensics tradition by hosting the first Utah Tournament of Excellence, or UTE, in 2015. The event continued by popular demand in 2016 and has become a permanent fixture in Utah high school forensics. Hosted for high school competitors across the state, the UTE features competition between the best of the best in Utah high school competitive debate in a round robin tournament format to determine the overall state champion among Utah high school competitors. Students qualify for the Utah Tournament of Excellence by winning their event (Policy, Public Forum, or Lincoln-Douglas Debate) at their respective high school tournament. In Utah, there are six state championship forensics tournaments, one for each classification of school (1A-6A). If the state champion is unavailable, their spot in the UTE passes down to next most successful competitor in that event at the classification’s tournament. As a consequence, the UTE is the most competitive tournament in the state and is the only tournament that determines an inter-classification winner via head-to-head competition between each state champion.

F. Scholarships

The John R. Park Debate Society is also proud to support high school students in continuing their education at the University of Utah by coordinating and offering debate scholarships to qualified high school students. Since fall 2010, the John R. Park Debate Society has awarded a combined total of over $300,000 in scholarships and financial support to Utah high school students. This support for local high school students is made possible by the generosity of the University of Utah, the College of Humanities, and the Department of Communication, as well as through support from the John R. Park Debate Society.

3. Summary of the 2018 Beehive Forensics Institute

The 2018 Beehive Forensics Institute hosted 114 participants from July 8-22. The intensive research experience was led by Jason Jordan from the University of Utah, Dr. Kyle Cheesewright, Director of Forensics from the College of Idaho, Misty Tippets, Debate Coach at James Madison University, Duncan Stewart, Assistant Director of Debate at the University of Utah, and Dr. Carlos Tarin, Director of Forensics at the University of Texas – El Paso. Participants produced over 2,500 pages of research during the camp for the upcoming competitive season. Students also received University of Utah college credit and $6000 in competitive scholarships were awarded to top performing students. In 2018, participants from 14 state attended, including California, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, Kentucky, Kansas, Washington, Massachusetts, Texas, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Montana, and Hawaii.
A. BFI 2018 Student Feedback

1. Quantitative Feedback:

At the end of the institute, we asked the students and teachers who participated to provide feedback for us in the form of an anonymous survey. The responses utilized the following scale:

- unsatisfactory (1)
- below average (2)
- average (3)
- above average (4)
- exceptional (5)

Overall experience: 4.47  
Overall Instructor Rating: 4.77  
Campus Facilities: 4.16  
Quality of Classes: 4.28

2. Qualitative Feedback:

The end of the survey was left open for anonymous feedback:

“T really enjoyed the college experience the camp gave me. I liked the lectures, and really enjoyed research time in the library.”

“I liked that the program had a lot of structure so I felt like everything I did was purposeful without making me feel overly constrained by offering free time, and time during classes to choose what I wanted to be focusing on.”

“I really liked how interesting and fun most of the classes were and how they could be fun but also educational at the same time.”
B. BFI 2018 Parent Feedback

1. Quantitative Feedback:

At the end of the workshop, we asked the parents of students that participated in the institute to provide feedback for us in the form of an anonymous survey. The responses utilized the following scale:

• unsatisfactory (1)
• below average (2)
• average (3)
• above average (4)
• exceptional (5)

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Overall Experience: 4.64
Interaction With Staff: 4.45
Registration Process: 4.36

2. Qualitative Feedback:

The end of the survey was left open for anonymous feedback:

“This camp is so well organized and communication is excellent. I felt completely comfortable sending my teen out of state. I know he has sharpened his debating skills and will do much better this year! He was very excited to share all that he learned in camp."

“Excellent camp! My daughter learned so much and is excited for the new topic. She wants to return next summer!”

“My daughter’s mind was blown (in a good way). We were expecting just some good practice for next year - and instead she really developed an interest in philosophy and political science...”
4. **Summary of the 2018-19 High School Workshops**

The October 2018 workshop had 155 high school participants. The high school students represented at the workshop came from a range of local schools (see below).

The workshop was divided into three sections: Cross Examination, Lincoln-Douglas, and Public Forum Debate. Two undergraduate students were assigned to each section along with a member of the John R. Park Debate Society’s coaching staff for support and supervision. It was held during the first two rounds of the Beehive Bonanza tournament and each section followed a similar order of events that included a lecture and instructional activities for high school students.

- Alta High School
- Ben Lomond High School
- Dixie High School
- Herriman High School
- Judge Memorial Catholic School
- Olympus High School
- Rowland Hall-St Mark
- Timpview High School
- West Jordan High School
- American Preparatory
- Copper Hills High School
- Grand County High School
- Hillcrest High School
- Logan High School
- Park City High School
- Roy High School
- Viewmont High School
- Beaver High School
- The Davidson Academy
- Green Canyon High School
- Jordan High School
- Northridge High School
- The Parker School
- Summit Academy
- Waterford School

The February 2019 workshop had 40 high school participants. The high school students represented at the workshops came from a range of local schools (see below).

The workshop was divided into three sections: Cross Examination, Lincoln-Douglas, and Public Forum Debate. Two undergraduate students were assigned to each section along with a member of the John R. Park Debate Society’s coaching staff for support and supervision. The workshop was held after high school hours from 4:30-7:30 pm and each section followed a similar order of events that included a lecture, instructional activities for high school students, and a short break for dinner.

- Hunter High School
- Juan Diego Catholic High School
- Judge Memorial Catholic High School
- Karl Maeser Preparatory Academy
- Roy High School
- Westlake High School
- Woods Cross High School
5. **Summary of the 2019 Utah Tournament of Excellence**

The 2019 Utah Tournament of Excellence was held on April 6, 2019 and featured 7 schools and over 30 students from around the state, including Beaver High School, Bryce Valley High School, Clearfield High School, Morgan High School, Providence Academy, Rowland Hall-St. Marks, Skyline High School, SLC West High School, Summit Academy, and Venture Academy took part in the tournament. Venture Academy won the Lincoln-Douglas Division, Summit Academy prevailed in Public Forum, and SLC West High School earned top honors in the Policy Division.

6. **Plan for 2018-2019 High School Outreach**

The 2019-2020 academic year will mark the 10th year of our high school outreach program. Thus far, our program has focused most of its efforts on providing judging and coaching support for local high school debate programs. As a result of the success of this year’s high school workshops, next year our goal is to continue to offer this support through a fall and spring workshop and to expand the workshops in size and offerings. These workshops will take place each semester on campus and will focus on offering coaching and support to local high school debate students. Teams of our college students will be assigned to conduct various portions of the workshops under the supervision of the Assistant Director of Forensics. These teams will implement curriculum and work with teachers and students to develop debate skills. In addition, the workshops will provide an on-campus experience for high school students and will incorporate the Office of Recruiting to answer questions and assist students aspiring to continue their education at the University of Utah. In addition, we will host, for the sixth year, the Utah Tournament of Excellence (UTE) in April. This tournament celebrates top competitors from each Utah high school classification (1A-6A) and culminates with awards for the “best of best” in Utah high school forensics.

7. **John R. Park Debate Society Contact Information**

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