# NDT Outreach & Advocacy Committee Preliminary Report

### Committee Members

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### Mandate

NDT membership, and collegiate policy debate participation in general, is in a slow and steady decline. This can be explained in a most basic way by saying that we have both lost programs that quit participating and we have failed to add new programs at a rate above replacement value. It is no exaggeration to suggest that at some point in the not-so-distant future, every team that attempts to qualify for the NDT will qualify. Collegiate policy debate is on a course to be non-national, non-representative collection of legacy programs.

In particular the number of co-curricular / faculty-led programs is in decline, with many of these types of programs either switching formats or ending forensics participation.

“Shrinkage” is not a problem unique to NDT-CEDA debate. Participation in AFA and NFA speech is down, as measured by the number of member programs.

### Fundraising—VIK

1—Alumni outreach specific fund a Chief Outreach Officer.

2—A specific fund to cover membership or even parts of NDT attendance to new, emerging, and struggling programs would probably be a benefit.

Fundraising is challenging

1) Fundraising for “debate” positions is and has been hard. The NDT tournament is having issues with this already. Donors want to give to their institution. We have not done enough work building an affinity with the NDT or the community in a broad sense to spur much in terms of fundraising. A number of years ago the BOT had a relatively large effort to raise money for the tournament. It was not successful. Part of the issue is that programs don’t want to give their likely donors to the community. They have their own fundraising objectives for those folks. –Leeper

We may want to reconsider how we structure the Board

2) I think we need to look at the structure of the Board of Trustees.  At most institutions the Board has a fundraising and outreach role.  As a result, the board is usually larger and composed of a different sort of person.  Our current board has a couple of current coaches and a few alums.  We need a board that is composed of people who might be philanthropically inclined and who could increase the profile of the activity.—Leeper

### Advocacy / Outreach: Staff Position—VIK

The NDT Committee and the NDT Board of Trustees Could create and fund a permanent position for a Chief Outreach Officer who will (1) act as an advocate for collegiate policy debate, (2) recruit and retain new collegiate policy debate programs, and (3) develop fundraising streams to fund said activities. –VIK

Previous efforts to begin addressing this decline have either merely tinkered at the edges of the issue or have been unsuccessful. One reason that our efforts are intrinsically limited is because the NDT relies on the voluntary efforts of debate professionals and academics who are already very busy. Our organization has zero non-volunteer staff members, and it has zero volunteers who are solely focused on addressing this decline. If the NDT wants to survive into the future, we need to do something very different than we have in the past. Creating a position for a Chief Outreach Officer could begin to reverse the decline in collegiate policy debate. –VIK

Funding: Ideally, this position could eventually become essentially self-funding through fundraising efforts. In the interim, it could be funded through increased organizational dues, fundraising efforts by the NDT Board, outreach to NDT alumni, and other sources. –VIK

The NDT Board and Committee are only charged with overseeing one tournament, the NDT. However, participation rates at the NDT inevitably (and likely soon) will be affected by the declining overall participation in collegiate policy debate. There is also a distinct risk that if the declining trend continues, it is likely that collegiate policy debate will become unsustainable and eventually disappear. If the NDT Board and Committee do not take on this charge, who will? We should collaborate with the AFA, CEDA, and the ADA on this project, but we should take the lead creating a permanent position for a Chief Outreach Officer for collegiate policy debate. –VIK

### Advocacy / Outreach: NDT Alumni—VIK

1—List of Recent Alums: Lists of past participants are easily available on Tabroom and Debateresults.  The Tabroom era represents an outreach group for volunteerism, and the latter group represents more of an opportunity for fundraising. Asking their programs to follow up with current contact information for outreach would be a way for the NDT to initiate contact with all current programs and with programs that no longer exist (and to ask why).—VIK

2—Volunteer Connections:  for struggling and emerging programs, there is less of a need to have someone who is fully “in” the activity at the moment, then to have access to a variety of “coaching” opportunities that established programs have by default.  NDT Alumni are clearly very good debaters - judging an occasional practice round or covering judging at a tournament can be very helpful outreach, particularly at programs where the move away from debate is partially happening due to director overcommitments to other areas of forensics. -VIK

### Advocacy / Outreach: Non-University Entities

### Advocacy / Outreach: Public Debates—Leeper

6) Reinvigorating public debates.  With all of the emphasis today about combating “fake news”, encouraging students to think about facts and come to conclusions about difficult subjects, public debates can have a new role.  Some of the best conversations I have had over time with administrators have been after a public debate.  Inter squad debates are good, but they also like competing against other institutions.  Involving some at risk institutions in public debates could help them. Or even involving the debaters in things like the presidential Debate Watch projects.—Leeper

### Advocacy / Outreach: Public Face—Leeper

7) Our public face.  We have to figure out how to self present, using social media, etc.  If we don’t, we will have trouble recruiting students, and/or meeting the modern PR needs of the institutions.  And unfortunately, the complexity of our activity doesn’t translate well on social media.—Leeper

### Advocacy / Outreach: Topic—Leeper

8) Public advocacy/a debate topic.  I have said for a while that we need to have a topic that debates higher education.  There is a great deal of substance in those debates.  That would give us a platform to engage the higher education community directly.  Additionally, we could engage our community in pushing out editorials/thought pieces about higher ed, what types of things that serve higher ed well, and why debate programs are a great example of those things.  We spend a lot of time in debates talking about the educational value of our activity, but very few of our students, coaches or alums have become engaged in higher ed advocacy.  That is the best safeguard for our programs in the long term. –Leeper

### Advocacy / Outreach: Universities with Debate Programs in Other Formats—DCH

There are at least three “growth” formats of debate in the United States

1—British Parliamentary (2 + 2 v. 2 + 2, limited prep)--

2—NFA Lincoln Douglas (1 v 1, LD times, policy topic)—circuits in Midwest / Ohio valley, West coast, “Northern Tier”

3—“Public Forum” Knock-offs (2 v 2, limited prep)—IPDA, “Public Forum” (at least 2 variants), etc.

Why are these formats growing?

* Active recruiting
* Lower time commitments (coaches, students)—tournament prep, tournament length
* Lower cost—shorter tournaments, more nearby tournaments

‘Troubled’ Formats

1—NDT / CEDA

2—NPTE (fast, technical parli)

3—NPDA (umbrella, includes NPTE programs, seen significant shrinkage since 2010)

Questions

1—Can / should we try to attract programs who are choosing “growing” formats?

2—Can / should we try to attract programs who are currently participating in “troubled” formats

### Advocacy / Outreach: Universities without Debate Programs

There should be geographic targeting for institutions, and alumni targeting for individuals continuing to work in higher ed. -VIK  
  
Alternate models than the “national travel” model to allow for balance of other work roles and work/life balance. -VIK

We should target schools without programs that have strong affinities with clusters of existing programs (B1G, AAU members, Ivy League, PAC-12, etc.) –DCH

Create a “Why Policy Debate” packet for administrations at non-member Unviersities. –DCH

Identify and recruit advocates (alums, current faculty members / administrators) to help create programs –DCH

### Advocacy / Outreach: Awards—Leeper

9) Awards.  Amy and Dave have pushed the Board of Trustees to create an alumni award.  That is great!  One of the ways you build a philanthropic culture is to find ways to award people that give them some publicity in their field, etc.  The NDT Board of Trustees may not be the right group to sponsor all of these, but I think there is more we can do here.—Leeper

### Advocacy / Outreach: Academic Conferences—Leeper

10) Academic conferences.  Many of our coaches are at NCA.  But we have programs in poli sci, in student activities, etc.  Do we ever consider submitting program proposals to those professional meetings?  This is a longer term strategy to help educate decision makers at institutions or to build affinity for debate on a broader scale-beyond the communication field.—Leeper

### Support: New Student Programs—VIK

New Debate Program Tips for STUDENT ACTIVITIES PROGRAMS

Congratulations on your interest in starting a debate program at your school.  You are not alone in this, but it will require some substantial work as a student to both begin and institutionlize the team.  Luckily, there are people willing to assist!  
  
As a new program, your membership fees in the Cross Examination Debate Association (http://www.cedadebate.org/) will be waived for your first three years.  CEDA also indicates that there should be registration fee waivers for new programs during this time. This will allow you time to institutionally grow your budget, but you will need to identify travel opportunities that are cost effective for your program in the beginning.

Contact the CEDA President (see an attached list of useful people) and Recording Secretary.  There is also a Committee for New Program Development that can offer suggestions. Finally, each geographic area of CEDA has a regional representative that will have an idea of opportunities in your immediate geographic area.  
  
CEDA is the organization that hosts the topic meeting for college policy debate and sanctions all tournaments with that topic.  The American Debate Association (https://americandebateassociation.com/) is a separate organization that sanctions a subset of those tournaments with some more specific competitive rules - the ADA is an affiliation that may make sense based on your program’s argument ideologies (more strictly old school policy) or geography (Mid-Atlantic/Mid West/South).  The National Debate Tournament (https://nationaldebatetournament.org/) is ONE tournament at the end of the season, but the qualification process may not be the best investment for an emerging program without some consideration, and as the NDT has no waivers, the CEDA National Championship can be a good alternative for successful open programs.   
  
While beginning your team, there are a few critical concerns:

#### 1.FUNDING SOURCE:

Is this a department funded program or student club activity?  This may change the travel rules and procedures you can use. Some student clubs require permission paper work to represent your school off campus a month in advance. Some departments operate on a reimbursement only model, with no upfront payments.  The sourcing/model will be important to answering other questions. If you don’t already know the answer to this question, and area student, then you should initiate a student club and use that model.

#### 2. SCHEDULE

Prioritizing your schedule is critical, and it is important to consider different travel models to begin your program because it will be limited by budget, and budgets will be very limited for beginning teams.  For example, programs emerging as a student activity may be expected to front out of pocket expenses to some degree both to further maximize the budget they had, but also to have something easy and predictable to show to Student Activities as the "student" contribution to the program and their commitment.  Food costs for meals not covered at the tournament is the first place that it is easy to demonstrate this “commitment”, and TRAVEL is the second easiest place (eg: can you get in someone’s car or buy a bus ticket).

Assuming the most limited funds, it might be easiest to find close travel options for initial seasons.  Generally, you are looking for a minimum of 3 or so tournaments in a semester to really improve your ability to debate over the year.

#### 3. Organization and Structure.

This is everything from thinking through recruitment on campus, to team flexibility to travel, to getting paperwork done for a student activity.  Know your campus - at some student based programs debaters often found that their rigorous academic schedule or basic timing questions like midterms significantly affected their availability to travel to tournaments.  Travel times can also influence this schedule.

But most important within this is the Student Activity or department based paperwork for your team.  Using the student activities model, typically you need some kind of Constitution or Mission Statement document, initial team officers, and basic recruitment to justify having a budget.  Most campuses now ALSO need travel permission forms, and determine the process for reimbursements or accessing funds ahead of time for travel and hotel costs. Finally, if another format of speech or debate exists on your campus as a club or in a department, you may have to negotiate or justify the distinction of the program.

#### 4. Basics for finding Tournament Information

Registration and Tournament information is found through [TABROOM.COM](http://tabroom.com/), as you may know.  You will probably need to create a Policy Debate account for your institution if you have not already done so for the team. The [University of Miami Calendar](http://debate.miami.edu/calendar/) keeps a running list of ALL tournaments as not everyone has posted on Tabroom until they have a full invite.  This can help you with the planning you need.

#### 5. Evidence

The ADA does produce a Novice Curriculum, which is a basic set of debate evidence for the topic.  That evidence is on their NCC link: <https://americandebateassociation.com/ncc/>The Arizona Debate Institute ( <https://arizonadebateinstitute.com/evidence/> ) also releases their camp evidence publically after the start of the season and will assist new program.

Finally, many teams are “open source”, and you can get new argument or research idea from “The Wiki” (<https://opencaselist.paperlessdebate.com/>), where disclosure is often posted by teams.

#### 6. Judging and Coaching

Looking for an area alum or volunteer may be a good place to start.  You typically need 1 judge for every two teams at a tournament. Some local tournaments or area programs may be able to assist you with this, but in your budget you should begin to account for paying judging or finding someone on campus to work with your program.  Even if you have no coach, other area coaches and officers will help answer questions about how debate works, and judges give lots of feedback to improve your debating.

### Support: Potential / Emerging Programs

The NDT should draft supporting statements about different models of debate programs - student, department, deans/honors, etc.  These models should include variants where the NDT itself is not necessarily the program goal or differentiates the opportunities in debate competition that are different in a “post mutual topic” world.  Novice debate recruitment, training, and competitive goals may be the more appropriate model for an emerging program than national travel. - VIK

([draft doc for Student Activities based program development](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Qy-F4iJBg5ktaHVwEGmtwa9o97Q2AIbi1gAUFlVM89Y/edit?usp=sharing))

Program Mentoring? -VIK

3) The letters of support thing is a good idea.  We did that before and it was helpful.  The trick to that initiative is that you have to find folks who have the appropriate academic credentials and people at peer or peer aspirant institutions.  –Leeper

### Support: Research on Benefits of Debate

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Statistics on what our people do?

Conventional wisdom is we send a lot of people into policy research, politics, and law.  The testimonial route of why policy debate is better prep for law school than Mock Trial, etc. might be helpful, to help programs that need to “recruit” or retain students (particularly programs that need to maximize team numbers) “sell” involvement in debate. –VIK

We need to gather data on debate’s benefits, both long-term (career paths, civic engagement), and short-term academic achievement. This should be a high priority, especially if we want to get external support I am working with some folks at UW and Augsburg on developing a set of analytic tools we can use—could certainly use help. --DCH

5) When the UDL’s started, one of the best things they did was to gather data and do research about the value of participation.  The college community has done relatively little of that.  I think anything we can do to provide ammunition for programs that are in trouble would be good.  There is a lot of discussion at universities these days about high impact practices that improve research, speaking, and critical thinking skills, as well as retention and graduation.  Debate does a really good job of that.  –Leeper

### Support: Troubled Programs

Source of trouble?  Budget, travel access, other program mandates? - what can be done external to the school to support programs? -VIK

NDT letters of recognition and support to existing coaches and programs? -VIK

Coordinating with other policy debate organizations (CEDA, ADA) on that recognition/outreach. -VIK  
  
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Side comment:  While the NDT is “only” one tournament, it is a tournament that dictates an awful lot of travel. The “National” schedule impacts regional debate - and in some ways, kills local debate opportunities.  This usually happens as we shift national tournaments a weekend in one direction or another, upending long established travel patterns. GSU being a week early (and using a weekend intended for the West Coast to have a weekend without conflicts) rippled through the whole east coast. Harvard and Wake shifting because next year November has more weekends will create trade offs. Programs who only travel nationally don’t see these effects necessarily, but the smaller programs do.  Making the season just a little bit harder doesn’t help maintain programs.

Also, while the NDT is “only” one tournament, it’s legacy for people who participated in debate prior to 1995 means that it is the de facto org for a number of people now in positions of power in higher ed admin, comm depts, and forensics.  Establishing metrics beyond a first round is a prima facie need when engaging in conversations about building new programs or adding policy to other forensics, because the perception is the “policy team” resources drain is too big. -VIK

4) In conjunction with letters of support, it would be good to have a group of experienced current or former directors or administrators who could help mentor a director whose program is in trouble. So many of the challenges programs face are less about debate than about the broader institution’s financial health or strategic direction. Sometimes it is useful to find someone who sees an institution from a different vantage point to help craft arguments and develop strategy. NCA used to provide a forum for that sort of mentoring, but maybe not anymore.—Leeper