



HIGH SCHOOL OUTREACH REPORT 2021 - 2022

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 Forensic Association (NFA), the International Forensics Association (IFA), and the United States University Debating Championship (USUDC). 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 10,000 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 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 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.

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 2020 the Beehive Bonanza was not held due to the Vice Presidential debate held on campus. In 2021, the Bonanza returned with its first fully virtual tournament, featuring 15 students from four schools across two states. 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 U and join our program.

D. The Beehive Forensics Institute

Another element of our high school outreach efforts is the Beehive Forensics Institute. In July 2019, The John R. Park Debate Society hosted 76 high school students at the tenth annual BFI. The summer 2021 BFI was canceled due to public guidance at the time related to the COVID-19 global pandemic. The institute offers an intensive 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 (IA-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 \$400,000 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 2021-2022 High School Outreach

- A. In order to continue our support of high school forensics during the unprecedented public health context of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the John R. Park Debate Society students and coaches developed free resources for the 2021-2022 high school forensics season. Available for free download via the University’s web services, these pages were viewed across the academic year. Each month students of the JRP produced evidence briefs and instructional videos to help guide high school students. These resources are an important component of team outreach because they provide instruction to students that may have little to no direct coaching for a myriad of reasons.
- B. The John R. Park Debate Society was set to host the seventh annual Utah Tournament of Excellence in April 2022. The tournament was cancelled due to scheduling impacted by the

COVID pandemic. 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. This year six schools were recognized as official UTE invitees:

American Preparatory Academy
Cedar Valley High School

Beaver High School
Corner Canyon High School

Bryce Valley High School
Park City High School

4. Plan for 2021-2023 High School Outreach

The 2022-2023 academic year will mark the 14th year of our high school outreach program. Our approach for this season involves outreach in three distinct categories: online materials, high school tournaments, and the pilot of our Refugee Community Debate League as our newest form of engagement with high schoolers.

- A. Online Materials: In previous years, 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 the free high school debate resources made available online, next year our goal is to continue to offer this support through the fall and spring to expand these efforts in size and offerings. Teams of our college students will be assigned to conduct various portions of the workshops under the supervision of the Director of Forensics. These teams will implement curriculum and work with teachers and students to develop debate skills.
- B. High School Tournaments: This year our outreach will include two on-campus high school forensics tournaments, the Beehive Bonanza and the Utah Tournament of Excellence (UTE). The Beehive Bonanza is notably one of the largest high school forensics tournaments in the Western United States and we will be bringing it back to campus this October. In previous years the Bonanza has received over 1,000 entries for competition, with competitors coming from as far as Hawaii. In addition to the Bonanza, for the eighth year, we will host the 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.
- C. Refugee Community Debate League: Finally, the JRP is proud to be piloting, for the first time in team history, our Refugee Community Debate League. In partnership with the Department of Communication, the JRP will engage in a 10-12 week long program at the Utah Department of Workforce Services where debate instruction will be provided for students of refugee backgrounds. The intensive will end with a third on-campus tournament for the students in the program. The free workshop is provided as a way for the students of this particular community to access debate education. The students will have the option of receiving 3 units of University of Utah credit that can be applied should they pursue higher education at the U. At the conclusion of the tournament scholarships will be offered to top competitors and the winner will receive a laptop computer.

5. John R. Park Debate Society Contact Information

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