The John R. Park Debate Society

The John R. Park Debate Society, formerly Utah Forensics, has been a campus organization since 1869. As we prepare to enter our 146th year, we are pleased to share with you our successes over the past year, as well as our plans for the future.

INAUGURAL UTAH TOURNAMENT OF EXCELLENCE RAISES THE BAR

On April 18, 2015, The John R. Park Debate Society inaugurated a new forensics tradition by hosting the first Utah Tournament of Excellence, or UTE. 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 five state championship forensics tournaments, one for each classification of school (1A–5A). If the state champion is unavailable, their spot in the UTE passes down to the 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.

This year contestants from Rowland Hall HS, Copper Hills HS, Bingham HS, Roy HS, Mt. Crest HS, Herriman HS, Summit Academy HS, American Leadership Academy, Panguitch HS, and Lone Peak HS took part in the tournament. Roy High School won the Lincoln–Douglas Division, Herriman High School prevailed in Public Forum, and Rowland Hall earned top honors in the Policy Division. Rowland High St. Marks School praised the tournament, noting that it “settle[d] the score” and “set a new standard” for Utah High School forensics competition.
DEBATE SOCIETY FINISHES MOST SUCCESSFUL SEASON IN DECADES!

The 2014–2015 competitive season marked the most successful season enjoyed by the John R. Park Debate Society in decades. At the first national tournament, the National Parliamentary Debate Association (NPDA) National Championship, the Debate Society entered the tournament ranked 6th in the season long rankings maintained by the NPDA. The Debate Society’s competitive roster featured 6 teams, including 3 composed of first-year debaters. Four of these teams finished with a winning record in preliminary rounds and two moved on to elimination debates. The team of Ashley Hellebuick and Jesse Hedin were eliminated in the first elimination debate, while teammates Duncan Stewart and Drew Marshall finished among the top 16 teams (out of 150 teams and over 40 participating institutions). Additionally, Duncan Stewart earned 7th place honors among individual debate competitors, as well as being named to the NPDA All-American Team. In overall competition (sweepstakes), the Debate Society finished 6th, matching its season long ranking and turning in an improvement over its 2014 finish.

At the second national tournament, the National Parliamentary Tournament of Excellence (NPTE), the Debate Society similarly set new team records. Unlike NPDA, which is open entry, the NPTE is restricted to the approximately top 64 teams that qualify through a season long process. This year, the Debate Society set a school record, qualifying three teams to the competition. Of similar note, two teams cleared to elimination round competition. The team of Shaylee Tulane and Weston Wood finished 31st at the tournament, while teammates Duncan Stewart and Drew Marshall finished in 6th place at the competition, improving on their NPTE season-long ranking of 7th.

Rounding out the national championship competition, 9 students traveled to Portland, Oregon to participate in the American Forensics Association’s National Individual Events Tournament. In only its third year since being re-established, the individual events team fielded 19 different competitive events in 8 of the competition’s 11 event categories.
Matching last year’s performance, the team finished in the top half of the over 80 participating institutions. And, for the second year in a row, turned in a performance that earned second place honors among participating PAC-12 institutions.

Capping this banner season, several graduating seniors received outstanding offers to continue their graduate and professional education at elite institutions, including the University of Washington, New York University, and Arizona State University. And, current and former members of the coaching staff secured employment at prominent institutions, including the University of Louisville and the University of Texas–El Paso.

DEBATE SOCIETY EXPERIENCES RECORD HIGH RECRUITMENT NUMBERS

The 2015–2016 competitive season is shaping up to be one that will build on the extraordinary success of the Debate Society over the past several years. If current recruitment numbers hold, the team will triple in size over the summer, creating the largest active team roster that we can find in the team’s history. We have already received confirmation of competitors joining us from Utah, California, and Illinois. All together, the team will feature over 45 competitors, including a group of over 15 returning competitors.

It is for this reason that we rely now more than ever on the support of our extensive and similarly successful alumni network. Please consider becoming a friend of forensics.
ALUMNUS, LINGOS FOUNDATION ESTABLISHES FORENSICS FIRST ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

Sofia Lingos–Papaliodis graduated from the University of Utah in 2006 earning an Honors Bachelors of Arts in both Psychology and Communication. While at the U, Sofia distinguished herself both in the Department of Communication and on the campus more broadly, serving as the Captain of the Debate Team, the Communication Director for ASUU, and founder of the University’s women’s crew team.

Since leaving the U, Sofia has led an equally impressive career. She completed her law degree at the Northeastern University School of Law in Boston Massachusetts, served as an intern at the Massachusetts Superior Court, taught as an adjunct professor at her former law school, and opened her own international corporate law office.

If you talk to her former debate coaches, nothing about Sofia’s success is a surprise. The graduate student director of the team during her time at the U, Dan Lair, noted, “Sofia was the best type of debate student, she was enthusiastic and fully committed to the educational benefits debate could offer.” He added that she also was exceptionally generous in her efforts to support other team members during her time on the team.

This April, Sofia continued that generosity through the creation of the John and Sonia Lingos Foundation Endowed Scholarship aimed at supporting outstanding members of the John R. Park Debate Society. Beginning next Fall, one student each year will receive a partial tuition scholarship supported by the endowment established by Sofia. In the time since Sofia created this fund, fellow alumni, Teresa Tuan and Kyle Witherspoon, have pledged annual contributions to help grow the resources available to support outstanding Debate Society members.

If you would like to make a contribution to the “Lingos Foundation Endowed Scholarship,” or if you would like to learn about other ways to support the team, contact Robyn Moreno, Assistant Director of Forensics, by email (robyn.moreno@utah.edu) or phone (801–585–7528).

BECOME A FRIEND OF UTAH FORENSICS! Friends of Forensics are supporters from throughout the community whose contributions provide vital support for public events, high school outreach, and other programs sponsored by the University of Utah Speech and Debate Team. In addition to offering this support, friends of the team receive a bi–annual newsletter updating them on the team’s accomplishments during the semester and upcoming plans. We hope that you will support the team monetarily or, if that’s not an option for you, we would be delighted to talk about other ways of supporting the team. We hope that you will join this community of Utah Forensics supporters. To become a friend of Utah Forensics, please email your name and address to Michael Middleton at m.middleton@utah.edu