Team Wins Another Squad National Championship

After a year of outstanding performances, the entire MSU Debate Team was awarded the 2002 Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) Seasonal National Championship. This title is given to the university that has the best overall squad performance throughout the long September-to-April season. This is the second time that MSU has earned this title, the last being in 1996. This championship was made possible by a string of incredibly strong performances, particularly at the final two tournaments of the season: the National Debate Tournament (NDT) and CEDA Nationals. While MSU did not win either of these tournaments, no other team in the nation returned a better overall performance than that from Michigan State University.

Leading the charge toward the squad national championship were the teams of graduating senior Austin Carson and junior Calum Matheson and the all-sophomore team of Greta Stahl and David Strauss. While these teams had incredibly strong performances all year, earning them national regular season rankings of third and sixth respectively, both teams managed to show conclusively that MSU is an indomitable (see National Champs, p. 2)

A New Era for Spartan Debate

Two national championships book-end the nine years Director of Debate Jason Trice spent associated with the MSU Debate Team. When Jason first transferred to MSU in 1994, he was part of the two person undergraduate team (with Elizabeth Repko) that won the CEDA National Championship Tournament of 1995. That victory catapulted the entire MSU program into what is now considered an era of national success and prestige. When Jason decided to leave MSU after the end of 2001-2002 debate season, he was still at the top of the debate world. Jason helped engineer the team's winning of the 2002 CEDA Seasonal National Championship. During the many years in between these two defining moments, Jason had transitioned from undergraduate debater, to assistant debate coach and MSU Masters degree student, and finally to the Director of Debate at MSU. (see Trice, p. 3)
National Champs (from page 1)

This year's NDT was held in March at Southwest Missouri State University. Only 74 two-person teams qualify for the NDT based on their record during the regular season. This year, MSU was one of only six schools to qualify three teams, adding sophomore Amber Watkins and senior Anjali Vats into the mix. The overall results of the squad were impressive. Carson and Matheson won seven of their eight preliminary debates, making them the top seed of the entire tournament. Stahl and Strauss had six preliminary wins and were also seeded in the top five. After such outstanding prelim performances, Carson and Matheson advanced to the quarterfinals where they were defeated by the State College of West Georgia. Meanwhile, Stahl & Strauss became one of only a few all-sophomore teams ever to make it to the semi-finals of the NDT after defeating Gonzaga, Emory and Whitman before losing to the University of Kentucky. Although Vats and Watkins did not qualify for elimination rounds, their hard work contributed to the overall success of the squad as the three teams collectively had wins over Dartmouth, Harvard, Berkeley, USC, Northwestern, Fort Hays State, and Emory—some of the strongest debate teams in the nation.

Building on the momentum of a fine NDT performance, the squad did even better at this year's CEDA Nationals in April. Of the 192 two person teams competing at Cal State Fullerton, MSU had four teams—the three which qualified for the NDT and sophomores John Groen and Suzanne Sobotka. All four teams had winning records and advanced to elimination rounds.

Again proving their undeniable strength as a team, Matheson and Carson maintained an impressive preliminary record. The team was undefeated after eight rounds and qualified for elimination rounds as the second seed behind Berkeley, which also had an 8-0 prelim record but received higher individual speaker points. Carson and Matheson went on to win five straight elimination rounds on unanimous decisions before losing to Fort Hays State University in the final round. The decision in this last debate of the season was excruciatingly close as four of the nine judges voted for MSU. This final round appearance was the fifth in nine years by an MSU team, and the second time in three years that MSU has been narrowly defeated in the final round of CEDA Nationals on a 5-4 decision.

Stahl and Strauss also returned an incredible performance. After winning seven preliminary rounds, the sophomores advanced through eliminations to the semi-finals before being scheduled to debate Carson and Matheson, who advanced to the finals as the higher seed. This accomplishment makes Stahl and Strauss the youngest of only four teams in the history of intercollegiate debate to reach the final four of both the NDT and CEDA Nationals in the same year (MSU Interim Director of Debate Mike Eber achieved this when debating for the University of Kansas in 1999 and MSU teams achieved this in 2000 and 2001). Moreover, MSU was the only program that had more than one team advance past the sweet sixteen at either CEDA or the NDT this year. Needless to say, it is exceptionally rare for two teams to have such impressive and commanding performances at the national tournaments.

None of this could have been accomplished without the help of the additional MSU debaters who worked in East Lansing to supplement research during CEDA and the NDT. Those debaters include freshmen Aaron Hardy, Maggie Ryan, Gabe Murillo, and John Rood. In addition, numerous alumni and former coaches, including Erik Cornellier, John Sullivan, Steve Donald, Jason Russell, and Aaron Monick provided invaluable contributions to team research at both the NDT and CEDA Nationals. The strength of our young team, institutional support, and network of supportive MSU alumni all bode well for the future success of MSU Debate.
Jason left Michigan State in order to accept a position as products manager at a successful electronics company located in his home-state of Oklahoma. The move has allowed him to be closer to his family and the family of his wife Emily. His emotional speech to the team at the annual end of the year party confirmed how difficult his decision to leave must have been: “I loved my time with the team and will forever miss it. I wish the best of luck to everyone who is involved with the continuing tradition of excellence maintained by Spartan debate.”

One of Jason’s final acts as Director was the strong recommendation to the Honors College that Michael Eber, one of MSU’s assistant debate coaches, be promoted to take over his responsibilities. This endorsement was accepted, and Mike is now the Interim Director of Debate at MSU. Mike joined the coaching staff in 2000, and this will be his third year working with the team. Asked whether the transition will interrupt the team’s success, Mike assures his fellow Spartans that “given the program infrastructure still in place, the talent level of the team, the dedication of the MSU coaching staff, and the generous support of the University, its friends and alumni, I have no doubt that MSU will remain at the top of the debate world.”

The MSU Debate Team will enter the 2002-2003 college debate season widely recognized as a powerhouse that could stand to win numerous individual and team awards. Greta Stahl and Dave Strauss (who last year were in the final four of both national tournaments while at the same time each earning perfect 4.0 grade point averages for the Spring 2002 semester) hope to surpass last year’s incredible accomplishments. Calum Matheson, a senior from East Lansing, will be reunited with Joe Siegmann (the two debated together back in high school) and will be widely recognized as another top flight team in the country. Calum and Joe will represent MSU in the prestigious Kentucky Round Robin held at the University of Kentucky in early October. Many other talented team members will be returning next year along with one of the largest incoming classes of prospective debaters that MSU has ever had. All will debate a year-long topic involving whether the U.S. should ratify one of several high-profile international treaties such as the nuclear test ban or the Kyoto treaty on global warming. With talent and hard work, the team stands ready to build upon the momentum continuing from last year.

High School Camp in Its Eleventh Year

The annual Spartan Debate Institute concluded at the beginning of August. This year’s SDI was another huge success. Over 170 debaters from 21 different states came to East Lansing to learn more about debate and to catch a glimpse of college life at MSU.

Students were instructed by some of the best high school and college debate coaches about debate research, speaking, strategy, and theory. The institute focused on the upcoming high school policy debate topic involving federal policy relating to mental health care.

Will Repko, the Head Debate Coach at MSU and co-founder of the SDI, commented that “the best part is that students from around the country get a chance to not only improve their debating, but also to see if MSU is the kind of place they would consider going to college.”
The MSU Debate Team would like to extend its gratitude to those of you who made generous financial contributions in the past year, including:

- Fay & Jack Steelman
- Wayne & Jane Repko
- James & Rhosan Stryker
- Issac & Donna Sheppard
- Thomas R. Roth
- Horton C. Southworth
- Anne S. Longman
- Benney L. Bonk
- Claudine Jackson
- Edward Pino
- John & Martha Monick

These contributions to the Debate Team Endowment help with travel expenses for an ever-growing Team and scholarships to continue attracting top-notch students to the program. If you would like to learn more about how you can increase your involvement in this award-winning program, please contact Team Director, Michael Eber, at (517) 214-6435 or the MSU Honors College Development Officer at (517) 355-2326.

Upcoming Events—Fall 2002

- September 21-23  Georgia State Tournament
- October 2-3       Kentucky Round Robin
- October 5-7       University of Kentucky Tournament
- October 26-28     Harvard Tournament
- November 2-4      Wayne State Tournament
- November 16-18    Wake Forest Tournament

All friends are invited to attend a portion of an event in your area. This provides an opportunity to meet the MSU coaches and debaters, say hello to old friends that may still be coaching college debate, watch a debate or two, and have a meal with the Team. Please contact Michael Eber in advance at (517) 214-6435 if you would like to join us at.

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