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SABBATICAL PROJECT: TEACHING IPDA (International Public Debate Association)

INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1997, the International Public Debate Association (IPDA) is one of the fastest growing interscholastic debate associations in the nation with competitive programs ranging from California to Florida, from Texas to Michigan. Its mission is to provide an opportunity for individuals to develop their advocacy skills in a forum that promotes appropriate and effective communication.

Since its founding, IPDA has grown to include not only individual debate but also two-person team debate. It maintains four distinct divisions, allowing competitive opportunities for anyone who chooses to test their skills in this competitive arena. The Novice Division allows individuals to learn competitive debate with others with little or no experience. Junior Varsity focuses on those with an intermediate level of experience, having competed at the high school level or with eight to sixteen collegiate tournaments of experience. Our Varsity Division tests the more skilled and experienced debaters against one another while our Professional Division is accessible to collegiate alumni, members of the community and other individuals who retain the competitive spirit long after their scholastic careers have come to a close.

Although it has been around for almost 20 years, NPDA only came to California after Phi Rho Pi, the California Community College National Tournament, approved it as an event in 2014. With limited knowledge of it, El Camino College has thus far not seriously participated in the event, but with its massive growth in popularity, El Camino must get

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on board in order to maintain its competitiveness; thus, the goal of my sabbatical was to gain understanding of IPDA, learn how to coach it, and to develop teaching materials. El Camino students will benefit from this project as they will be able to compete in IPDA in the 2016-2017 academic year, culminating in competition at the National Tournament in April 2017 in Washington, DC.

My sabbatical project had three components: 1) travel to three tournaments that offered IPDA including the IPDA National Tournament in Baytown (Houston), Texas; 2) visit schools that specialize in IPDA to observe coaching; 3) create teaching materials in the form of lecture notes and student handouts. In addition, I coached at an IPDA camp for students interesting in learning the event.

TRAVEL TO TOURNAMENTS THAT OFFER IPDA, INCLUDING IPDA NATIONALS

In the semester of my sabbatical, I attended the following forensics tournaments: Tabor-Venitsky Invitational on the campus of Cerritos College, February 12-14, 2016; IPDA National Championships, on the campus of Lee College, Baytown, Texas, March 31-April 3, 2016; Phi Rho Pi National Community College Championships, Hilton Orange County, April 3-9, 2016.

At the above tournaments I observed multiple debate rounds, but the most important learning opportunity occurred at the IPDA National Championships in Texas. At this tournament, attended by 90 schools, most of which were universities, I observed preliminary debate rounds and judged quarterfinals of the professional division, and semi-finals and finals in the varsity division. In doing so, I was able to learn how the

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event is practiced by 4-year universities at the highest levels. I was also able to gain understanding of a professional division, which instead of limiting entry to college students, allows anyone to compete. The round I judged pitted a high school teacher against an attorney. Professional divisions are not recognized in California so it was a rare opportunity. I also met with Mary Jarzabek, Managing Director of the Executive Board of IPDA and IPDA coach at Louisiana State University, Shreveport. Professor Jarzabek was able to explain to me the origins of IPDA, its philosophy, and why it has been able to resist evolution into a faster, more theoretical form of debate—a problem in almost every other debate format. The IPDA National Tournament invitation is attached.

SCHOOL VISITATION FOR COACHING OBSERVATION

The schools whose coaching sessions I attended were Cerritos College, El Paso Community College, and Arkansas Tech University (on the campus of Lee College, Baytown, Texas). Because they provided the most unique learning experience, I will focus on coaching with El Paso and Arkansas Tech.

At El Paso Community College I worked with Professor and Director of Forensics Keith Townsend to prepare his novice and junior debaters to compete in IPDA. Coaching began with lecture on affirmative strategies (i.e., policy and value debate theory, case construction, and rebuttal), and negative strategies (policy and value off theory, off-case construction, and rebuttal). I then had the opportunity to coach debaters who have competed in the event and to hear their interpretation of how the event is practiced at

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the community college level. I also had the chance to quiz Professor Townsend on his strategy in coaching IPDA. El Paso has competed in IPDA for two years and have advanced debaters to elimination rounds at 4-year tournaments.

With the Arkansas Tech team, I watched Director of Forensics Dr. Gabriel Adkins with his squad. As a successful 4-year university team that has competed in IPDA for over a decade I was able to see how a seasoned program approaches the event.

TEACHING MATERIALS/STUDENT HANDOUTS

I produced 41 pages of lecture notes and 15 handouts for students. Following are the subjects upon which I concentrated:

Stock Issues. Material for both for policy debate and value debate. Writings cover both an explanation and analysis of criteria, harms, plan, solvency, and advantages.

Structure of IPDA policy and value debate cases. A policy topic mandates the affirmative team advocate passing a governmental policy (a plan) to solve a significant societal policy. Subtopics covered are resolutional analysis including criteria, background, plan and advantages.

Disadvantages. Material addresses theory and components of a disadvantage, advanced by the negative side of the topic, to an affirmative plan. Materials and handouts include analysis of the components uniqueness, link, internal link, and impact. Analysis of defending disadvantages against affirmative attack is also included.

Counterplans. A counterplan is an alternative way of solving the problem identified by the affirmative side in a policy debate; it allows the negative side to win the debate by also advocating change, rather than by merely pointing out disadvantages to the affirmative's advocacy. Theoretical underpinnings of debate counterplans was reviewed, as it applied to IPDA. The structure of a counterplan and the ways in which to neutralize it when argued by the opposing team were covered.

Topicality in IPDA. Topicality is the notion that the affirmative debater or affirmative debate team is not upholding the specific resolution, either by incorrectly defining one of the key terms, or by using examples that do not uphold the definitions that were established. It is a particularly important position as if the affirmative side loses topicality, it loses the debate. Material includes the general theory of topicality and the unique way it is practiced in IPDA.

Trichotomy. Again, material includes the general theory of trichotomy—that there are propositions of fact, value, and policy—and how it is practiced in IPDA.

Flowing. How to keep track of the arguments made in a debate is called flowing and is a difficult skill to learn. I produced a list of common abbreviations and devised skill drills to help students learn this critical skill.

Topic selection and research. IPDA rules mandate that debaters get a choice of five topics from which to choose. The negative debater strikes a topic, then the affirmative debater strikes one; this goes on until one topic is left to be debated. Material addresses the strategy in striking topics to maximize debater knowledge. After the

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resolution is decided upon, debaters get 45 minutes with a laptop to prepare their arguments. Lecture notes address how to best use prep time, analysis and citation of appropriate (i.e., credible, unbiased, and recent) sources. Also included is strategy for current events research prior to the tournament.