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## ABSTRACT

Encouraging debaters to participate in undergraduate research enhances the quality of their undergraduate experience, increases debate student recruitment and retention, and favorably publicizes the benefits of training in forensics. The process of encouraging debaters to participate in undergraduate research does not come naturally, and must be formally integrated into squad practices and procedures. Three suggested methods are: (1) changing squad ethos from competition to skill development; (2) codifying squad evidence citation practices; and (3) promoting scholarly and field-related research. There are literally hundreds of undergraduate research opportunities available. Several major undergraduate research conferences exist, including the National Conference on Undergraduate Research, Undergraduate Communication Honors Forum, DePauw National Undergraduate Honors Conference; National Student Success Conference, and the Mid-Continent Undergraduate Student Research Conference and Competition. Throughout their undergraduate careers, debaters should be encouraged to create a portfolio that contains copies of their research projects, writing samples, a list of debate awards they have received, narrative statements that summarize their academic and personal experiences, transcripts of their academic records, and an updated resume. The final stage in the undergraduate research process is revising and submitting students papers for publication. The next step is to encourage debaters to apply for competitive undergraduate scholarships and awards, such as Morris K. Udall Scholars, Canada-U.S. Environmental Studies Fulbright Grants, Gleitsman Foundation Awards, Truman Scholarships, National Security Education Program, Rhodes Scholarships, and Davies-Jackson Scholarship. Establishing a strong relationship between debate programs and undergraduate research is mutually beneficial. (RS)

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**Optimizing Student Research: Forming Partnerships  
with Undergraduate Honors Research Programs**

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It is unfortunate that few debaters participate in formal undergraduate research activities. In many respects, the skills emphasized by these two programs are similar: each places a premium on cultivating sophisticated research skills, arming students with sound analytical techniques and developing their oral presentation abilities. Because debate is structured as a competitive activity, however, students sometimes neglect the immediate practical applications of the skills and talents that they have acquired. This paper argues that encouraging debaters to participate in undergraduate research enhances the quality of their undergraduate experience, increases debate student recruitment and retention, and favorably publicizes the benefits of training in forensics.

Undergraduate research is multifaceted and somewhat difficult to define. At its core, undergraduate research activities encourage students to engage in independent or collaborative research that can be presented to public or academic audiences. Although this research often grows out of curricular or extra-curricular activities, its intended audience is broader and it is seldom part of the student's formal academic program. Undergraduate research may include, but is not limited to, the presentation undergraduate conference papers; participation in topical colloquia, lectures, panels or debates in areas of student expertise; or the publication of student work in refereed journals, trade publications or other venues.

Colleges and universities have varying degrees of commitment to undergraduate research. At some institutions, undergraduate research programs have been established and assistance is available from administrators. Highly competitive undergraduate research activities may require significant advance preparation and the solicitation of grants or other forms of financial assistance. For example, in order to conduct their research, many students receive assistance from the National

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Science Foundation, the National Endowments of the Arts or Humanities, the National Institutes of Health or other major granting institutions. Depending on the degree of sophistication involved, students may need to seek prior permission for the use of campus labs or facilities to conduct their research and they may need to obtain approval from local advisory committees on human experimentation. Fortunately, most debate-related undergraduate research activities are situated in the humanities rather than the natural sciences and require only minor amounts of outside approval or support to achieve fruition. In addition, some institutions have little formal support for undergraduate research activities and faculty members may have to locate resources on their own.

### **Formalizing Undergraduate Research as Squad Practice:**

The process of encouraging debaters to participate in undergraduate research does not come naturally, and must be formally integrated into squad practices and procedures. Coaches should emphasize conference presentations as a clear squad goal at the beginning of each year, and should discuss the process of developing a research agenda with each individual debater. Subsequent research assignments can be tailored to coincide with each student's interests and goals. There is clearly no single path to success, but here are three suggested methods that have proven useful in the past:

#### **1) Changing Squad Ethos from Competition to Skill Development:**

Competitive goals shape and motivate student participation in debate. These goals are justifiable and appropriate. To encourage participation in undergraduate research, however, coaches need to emphasize that the competitive nature of the activity is a starting point and that the end-use of debate research is a conference paper or an article, rather than the national tournament. In addition to providing a pragmatic outlet for

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the sophisticated and voluminous research that debaters conduct each season, this approach has the added benefit of providing a rationale for students to remain in debate even though they may not have experienced competitive success. Although coaches often repeat the mantra that debate experience is beneficial to students whether or not they win rounds, providing a venue for students who have not excelled competitively helps them view their own skill development process in the near-term, rather than the long run.

2) Codifying Squad Evidence Citation Practices: One of the primary barriers that many debaters face when converting debate research into undergraduate conference papers or journal publications is the daunting task of re-researching many of the primary sources. By requiring squadmembers to include full and complete A.P.A. or M.L.A. citations on every piece of evidence they produce for the squad, program directors can significantly lower the opportunity costs involved and thereby increase the number of students willing to participate in undergraduate research.

Adopting M.L.A. or A.P.A. citation standards is neither difficult nor time consuming. Most word processing programs can easily replicate high volumes of citations, and the use of dual citations (where every piece of evidence has both a speed cite and an A.P.A. or M.L.A. cite) eliminates possible in-round strategic drawbacks to the M.L.A. or A.P.A. formats. This technique improves the quality of evidence generated by the squad and provides an additional safeguard to insure the integrity of the squad's evidence system.

3) Promoting Scholarly and Field-Related Research: An emphasis on undergraduate research subtly alters the research ethos of squads which wholeheartedly embrace this philosophy. Because undergraduate conference papers or publications must be peer reviewed, debaters need to keep in

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mind the rigorous evidentiary demands of a scholarly audience. Although newswire evidence from Lexis-Nexis may satisfy debate critics, scholars are unlikely to be impressed. Focusing debate research on expert, field-related evidence not only produces strategic advantages in debate rounds, it also makes the evidence much more useful in subsequent scholarly ventures.

Other programmatic changes can be implemented to reflect the unique goals and expectations of individual institutions. Some liberal arts colleges, for example, encourage at least one semester of study abroad. Debaters can achieve this goal readily if they begin the process of planning early. Students need not suffer competitively or academically if the Director of Forensics is a proactive participant in their academic planning process.

### **Undergraduate Research Opportunities:**

There are literally hundreds of undergraduate research opportunities available. On campuses without formal research programs, or where financial support for student travel to conferences is not available, students can be encouraged to participate in more limited venues, or to submit their work for publication or for an award, rather than for presentation at a conference. At the very minimum, every campus provides some opportunity for students to showcase their talents, and coaches should encourage debaters to do so at every opportunity.

Here are some inexpensive ideas for initiating this process at institutions that do not currently provide support for undergraduate research:

- Encourage students to convert debate arguments into research papers and to submit samples of their work to college or university "Best of Student Writing" competitions.

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- Organize a series of public debates on campus to showcase student talent. These events can be compiled and documented as part of a student's resume' or portfolio. (Specific recommendations for resume' and portfolio assistance will be outlined below).
- Train debaters in public debate and presentation techniques and ask for them to be available to serve as outside speakers for area high school classes or for lower-level undergraduate classes on campus.
- Encourage students to write summaries of their favorite arguments in an essay or editorial form so that they can be published in local newspapers or campus publications. Once published, the articles can be reprinted in campus or alumni publications. Students should be encouraged to preserve copies of their publications and writing work for inclusion in their writing samples.
- Arrange for students to be interviewed on local television and radio programs. This sort of publicity is especially valuable if the campus has its own television or radio studio. If possible, help the students obtain video-taped documentation of these interviews for inclusion in their portfolios.

These are just a few of the ways that the seeds for undergraduate research can be planted at institutions which do not yet provide financial or administrative support for large-scale undertakings. None of the options detailed above require substantial financial support from the host institution and each is enormously beneficial for both the students and the program. From the vantage point of students, these initial experiences provide exposure to alternative audiences for debate-related research and equip them with the skills necessary to

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tackle more ambitious undergraduate research projects. The program, in turn, is afforded an opportunity to showcase the talents of debaters outside of the arena of intercollegiate competition.

### **Undergraduate Research Conferences:**

Participation in undergraduate research conferences is difficult for students at institutions which do not fund and support such activities. Travel costs are often significant and cash-strapped students will be hard-pressed to attend conferences where their papers have been accepted if they must fund the travel themselves. For those institutions which do provide such support, however, there are a plethora of opportunities for debaters to become involved in undergraduate research. What follows is a description of several of the major undergraduate research conferences. This list is in no way exhaustive and coaches are advised to seek further information on their own campuses or via the internet. Although every effort has been made to insure that the list contains the most accurate and timely information available, conference sites, dates, locations and contact persons may be dated and readers are advised to make contact with prospective conference hosts as soon as possible to obtain time-sensitive material.

**The National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR):** Formed in 1987 as a means of bringing together promising undergraduate students to present the results of their scholarly research and creative activities, NCUR is possibly the largest and most prestigious conference of its kind in the United States. This year's conference will be held on the campus of the University of Texas. Submission and conference information may be obtained by writing to:

NCUR 1997  
University Honors Center  
The University of Texas at Austin  
P.O. Box 7336  
Austin, TX 78713-7336

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E-Mail: ncur97@uts.cc.utexas.edu

**Undergraduate Communication Honors Forum:** Hosted by the Rochester Institute of Technology, this conference is limited to students whose papers are accepted and who have a cumulative GPA of 3.3 or greater. The forum recognizes achievement in a variety of areas within the discipline of communication studies. Submission and conference information may be obtained by writing to:

Michael Prosser  
Kern Professor in Communications  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
92 Lomb Memorial Drive  
Rochester, NY 14623-5604

**The DePauw National Undergraduate Honors Conference:** DePauw has been described as an outstanding opportunity for beginning researchers to discuss their work with leading communication scholars; this conference focuses on connecting students with senior research scholars in one-on-one or small-group settings. Submission and conference information may be obtained by writing to:

Kent Menzel, Director  
Undergraduate Honors Conference  
Department of Communication Arts and Sciences  
DePauw University  
Greencastle, IN 46135

E-Mail: KMENZEL@DEPAUW.edu

**National Student Success Conference:** This conference focuses on bringing students and faculty together for the purpose of sharing strategies that enhance student academic performance. Among the topics of particular interest to debaters is the interest group section entitled, "Library Programs and Research Skills." Submission information and details about the conference can be obtained by writing to:

Janelle Darr  
National Student Success Conference  
University College  
Campus Box 6  
Wichita State University  
1845 Fairmount

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Wichita, KS 67260-0006

### **Lambda Pi Eta National Undergraduate Research Conference:**

**The University of St. Thomas Undergraduate Communication Research Conference:** In its fourth year, this conference features a variety of topic-oriented student panel presentations as well as a plenary session and keynote address. Submission and conference information may be obtained by writing to:

Research Conference  
University of St. Thomas  
Department of Communication LOR303  
2115 Summit Avenue  
Saint Paul, MN 55105

### **Mid-continent Undergraduate Student Research Conference and**

**Competition:** Held each April, this conference is sponsored by the Institute of Writing and Critical Thinking. Submission information and details may be obtained by writing to:

Gary Ross  
Mid-continent Institute  
Minot State University  
500 University Avenue West  
Minot, North Dakota 58707

The list above is not exhaustive, and many additional regional opportunities may be available. At many institutions, the objective of undergraduate research programs is to have students research, write, revise and submit their work during the fall of their Junior year. Hopefully, their submissions will be accepted, and they will present their work sometime during the spring. At that point, they should be encouraged to revise their research again over the summer, with an eye toward submitting their project for publication.

By the time they are Seniors, students that have gone through the steps outlined above will be ready to start new projects and submit their work for presentation at national or regional professional conferences. SCA and each of the regional speech associations, for

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instance, have panels dedicated to showcasing outstanding undergraduate research. Truly remarkable undergraduates should be encouraged to submit their papers for blind peer review, with the hope that they will be accepted for presentation in general sessions at regional and national conventions.

### **Student Portfolios:**

Throughout their undergraduate careers, debaters should be encouraged to create a portfolio that contains copies of their research projects, writing samples, a list of debate awards they have received, narrative statements that summarize their academic and personal experiences, transcripts of their academic records an updated resume' and a summary of their career goals. The portfolio is an excellent opportunity for students to showcase their academic and creative talents.

There is no single correct format. Some student portfolios include videotaped interviews, artwork, poetry or other creative endeavors. Many also include letters of recommendation. Experienced debaters should remember to include videotapes of public debates they have participated in along with any supporting publicity documenting their tournament victories. Those with computer skills may wish to scan all of the documents that are contained in their portfolios into a single powerpoint presentation that contains video-clips, full texts of their papers, and so forth. In addition to organizing information that is often requested in graduate school or scholarship applications, the portfolio is a good way to help students see regular progress in their academic preparation.

### **Revising and Publishing Undergraduate Research:**

The final stage in the undergraduate research process is revising and submitting student papers for publication. As is the case with any

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scholarly argument, the revision process is often long and arduous. Students can be encouraged to complete the process if the Directors of Forensics explains the editorial process and prepares them in advance to expect suggestions for revision from the editor. For the most part, when students realize the tremendous personal and professional opportunity that publishing their works can provide, they are enthusiastic to participate.

One useful way to acquaint students with the process of research, conference presentation, revision and publication is for coaches to keep them regularly informed with the progress of their own research agenda. By regularly discussing their research projects, encouraging students to provide feedback and overviewing the differing editorial requirements of various journals, coaches can illustrate the behaviors they hope their students will model. Coaches should also keep copies of successful presentations and publications submitted by former students to provide examples for current students.

Depending on the sophistication of the individual research project, students should be encouraged to submit their work to either a journal with a special call for undergraduate papers, or a bona fide professional journal. In the later case, the paper will go through the same blind peer review process as any other submission to the journal and the author will not be identified as a student.

State or regional journals are a great place for students who have not previously published their work to begin. The Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota Journal, for example, sponsors an annual competition for undergraduate research papers in speech communication and publishes the top three papers submitted. Many other journals offer similar competitions.

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**Undergraduate Scholarships and Awards:**

The next logical step in this process is to encourage debaters to apply for competitive undergraduate scholarships and awards. Again, the benefits of this approach are threefold: 1) It encourages debaters to be mindful of the skill-related, rather than tournament-related objectives of forensics participation; 2) It provides an outlet for the research that students have undertaken throughout the course of the season; and finally, 3) It reminds administrators and faculty members of the sophistication of the skills acquired as a result of participation in debate. The list which follows identifies many national and international awards and scholarship opportunities which are available to undergraduates and for which debate participation may provide particularly appropriate undergraduate training.

Readers are reminded that, once again, the list is not exhaustive and they should consult with their own institutions for applications and further information. In the event that such information is not available on campus, descriptions of many of these awards and scholarships are available over the internet. Particular attention should be paid to application deadlines, as many of these awards and scholarships are highly competitive and incomplete or late applications may be summarily disregarded.

**DOE Integrated Manufacturing Pre-Doctoral Fellowships:** Three-year fellowships of \$20,000 with additional educational allowances of up to \$15,000 per year. Targeted at students with engineering and environmental studies background who plan on pursuing graduate work in integrated manufacturing.

**Morris K. Udall Scholars:** Awarded annually to fifty-five individuals for use during the next academic year, these awards are designed specifically to promote excellence in national environmental

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policymaking and are particularly appropriate for debaters with significant experience researching environmental policymaking. They are intended for those who will pursue careers in environmental policymaking.

**Canada-US Environmental Studies Fulbright Grants:** Designed to study the impact of NAFTA on US and Canadian environmental regulation, these \$15,000 annual awards are available to American students who plan to study any of the following subjects in Canada: Environmental law or health, public policy formation, trade regulation, conservation, NAFTA and its effect on the environment, water resources and their allocation, waste management and recycling or pollution control.

**Fulbright Grants:** The US Federal Government's premier scholarship program, Fulbright grants are designed to provide more than 7,000 recent graduates of American undergraduate institutions opportunities for intellectual or creative development and international experience. Projects may include formal academic work, or a variety of independent, special project, or service-learning opportunities. Highly individualized, Fulbright grants offer debaters with a record of undergraduate research an excellent opportunity to tailor their graduate education to meet their own interests and skills.

**Gleitsman Foundation Awards:** Michael Schwerner Activist Awards are dedicated to the memory of Civil Rights activist Michael Schwerner. Five awards are granted nationally to undergraduates who have demonstrated their commitment to social justice, civic activism and community service. Topics such as social and economic justice, racism, human rights, sexism and environmentalism have formed the cornerstone of applications from activists who have recently won these awards.

**Goldwater Scholarship Awards:** Named for former Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater, these one and two-year scholarships are targeted at

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students in the physical and natural sciences, engineering and mathematics. The award is unique because it is targeted at students in their junior or senior year and provides up to \$7,000 per year to defray the costs of their education while they are undergraduates.

**Andrew Mellon Fellowships in Humanistic Studies:** These highly competitive scholarships underwrite the first year of graduate study in the humanities. Designed to attract exceptional students to careers in teaching and research in the humanities, the program seems well-suited for debaters who wish to continue research on their favorite arguments at the graduate level.

**Truman Scholarships:** These awards are designed for students who wish to pursue careers in government, law or public service. Students apply when they are Juniors and, if accepted, receive \$3,000 for use during their Senior year and up to \$27,000 for use during graduate school. Approximately eighty-five awards are granted each year from a pool of 1,400 applicants.

**James Madison Memorial Fellowships:** Geared specifically at prospective junior and senior high school teachers in the subjects of American history, civics and social studies, these awards are particularly suited for debaters with strong backgrounds in political argument, constitutional interpretation and the history and development of American social policy.

**National Security Education Program:** These awards are specifically designed to encourage serious study abroad in less commonly taught cultures in critical areas of the world. The program is ideal for debaters who have a research background and significant interest in global development policies and their application in lesser-developed nations. Knowledge of foreign cultures and competence in a foreign language is an essential component of the application process.

**Rhodes Scholarships:** Named for British colonial pioneer and statesman Cecil Rhodes, these prestigious two-year awards (renewable to a third year) subsidize educational costs at the University of Oxford. The awards cover all costs associated with education, and winners receive an additional stipend for living expenses. Applications are evaluated on three criteria: 1) literary and scholastic attainments; 2) Truth, courage and devotion to duty, sympathy for and protection of the weak, kindness and fellowship; and finally, 3) Leadership ability. There are no restrictions on field of inquiry.

**Raoul Wallenberg Scholarships:** This program offers ten awards annually for a graduate-level study at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The award is does not restrict the recipient's field of study and training begins with an intensive summer Hebrew language program during the summer.

**Davies-Jackson Scholarship:** Recipients receive two-year full scholarships at St. John's University in Cambridge including summer and vacation maintenance expenses. The award is intended for students who have shown outstanding achievement in a liberal arts setting and who would benefit from rigorous study overseas.

In addition to the awards described above, there are many other governmental, private, industry and trade-group scholarships available for talented students. Undergraduate research participation provides excellent training for the application process and arms students with significant writing samples that can be submitted as part of their application.

#### **Summary and Conclusion:**

This paper has outlined a variety of ways to link debate programs with undergraduate research. Establishing a strong relationship between these programs is mutually beneficial. For students, undergraduate

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research opportunities provide an outlet for the tremendous amount of debate research undertaken during the season, a chance to demonstrate intellectual excellence and to advance their academic careers, and a means by which skills honed in debate can be used in other venues and can be targeted to different opportunities. For programs, undergraduate research participation by debaters showcases the work of talented students and serves as an additional rationale for funding intercollegiate debate. At the institutional level, undergraduate research is one way that a college or university can demonstrate the scholastic aptitude of its students and provide employers or graduate schools with evidence of the institution's curricular excellence.

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