

The Debater

The Voice of the MSU Debate Team

MSU Continues Winning Ways at the NDT!

MSU Debate continued its long tradition of competitive success in 2011-2012, qualifying two teams to the prestigious National Debate Tournament in March. Kaavya Ramesh (IR/Chinese '14), Evan Hebert (IR '15), Aniela Butler (IR '15), and Jack Caporal (IR '15) were among the 78 debate teams from around the country who qualified for the national championship tournament at Emory University.

The team of Hebert/Ramesh qualified with a "First Round Bid", a Top-16 designation as voted on by national coaches. They advanced to the elimination rounds and defeated the University of Michigan to finish in 9th place. The topic was: "Resolved: The United States Federal Government should substantially increase its democracy assistance for one or more of the following: Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen."

Rarely have so many young students from one school placed this highly in national competition. The result bodes well for success in 2013 and beyond.



Jack Caporal and Aniela Butler at the 2012 National Debate Tournament in Atlanta, GA.



National Debate Tournament Qualifiers, 2011-2012

Back Row: Director Casey Harrigan, Project & Events Coordinator Carly Wunderlich, and Assistant Coach David Strauss
 Front Row: Jack Caporal, Aniela Butler, Kaavya Ramesh, and Evan Hebert

Public Events Feature MSU Students

On August 25, 2011, MSU debaters Evan Hebert and Troi Thomas participated in a public debate against Wayne State University as part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Conference on Environmental Justice.

The EPA debate focused on issues of environmental justice: how environmental and economic policies should be structured to minimize disproportionate impact on specific communities. The MSU students defended a balanced approach of “sustainable development” that places as much emphasis upon poverty-reduction and economic growth as it places upon environmental protection.

The event, held at the Renaissance Center in downtown Detroit, MI, was well attended by members of the local community and conference attendees from around the nation.



Students and staff from MSU and Wayne State pose with officials from the EPA after the public debate in Detroit, MI.

The debate was MSU’s third with the EPA, following events in 2009 and 2008.

The MSU Debate Team would like to thank the organizers the EPA – as well as coordinators from Debatesolutions.com – for the continued opportunities to participate in these events, and to showcase how debate skills can translate into a real-world policymaking environment.

A Word from Director Casey Harrigan

The 2011-2012 season was an exciting time for MSU Debate! With accomplishments in public debates, outreach, and involvement in the high school community in addition to continued excellence in our core mission of competitive success, the team took a definite step toward becoming a leader in several communities.

Located within the Honors College, the debate team seeks to fulfill its mission of serving students who seek to achieve academic excellence. In doing so, debate is an activity like few others: it trains students in the key skills required for success in the modern world—the ability to research and digest complex arguments, reflexivity and a willingness to listen and engage with contrary viewpoints, and a self-driven capability to think clearly and critically about important decisions.

I want to thank all of the alumni and supporters of the team for their contributions and for their continued belief in the transformative power of the activity. With your help, we will continue to promote debating at MSU and throughout the state of Michigan and United States.

MSU Debate Says Goodbye to Graduating Seniors



Josh Miller (Holland, MI), a four-year member of the team, graduated from MSU this spring. He majored in Social Policy and received his degree from James Madison College. He entered a Master’s program in Communication at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and will be an assistant coach for their debate program. The MSU Debate Team wishes Josh the best of luck and congratulates him on an outstanding career!

Spartan Presidential Debate Series a Success!

In conjunction with each of the 2012 Presidential and Vice Presidential debates, MSU held non-partisan events to provide expert coverage and analysis for high school students with the goal of producing reasoned civic discourse and an informed public.

The Debate Team partnered with high schools in Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, and East Lansing to offer a public viewing of the debates, round-table style expert commentary, and a question and answer period.



Head Coach Will Repko poses with panelists from the Atlanta event, including MSU Debate alumni Abby Schirmer (furthest right) and Garrett Abelkop (second from right).

Several of the events drew over 200 students, demonstrating the demand from high school aged youth for opportunities for political engagement. The events were an outgrowth of the Spartan Debate Institute and Hoya Spartan Scholars programs, which seek to enrich the positive impact of debate at the high school level.



Spartan Presidential Debate Series event held in East Lansing at the International Center at MSU.

Arab Spring Roundtable Connects with MSU Faculty



MSU students Aniela Butler, Quinn Zemel, and Kaavya Ramesh participate with faculty members Dr. Aronoff (JMC) and Dr. Hassoun (Human Medicine).

After researching the competitive, season-long topic about U.S. assistance for the Arab Spring, the team decided that it should share its insights with the broader MSU student population and held a public roundtable discussion on the issue.

About fifty students, primarily from James Madison College, attended the event held in Case Hall in late April 2012. Topics of discussion ranged from a current events update to a theoretical discussion of the barriers to successful democratization in the Middle East and North African to suggested policy changes for the Obama administration to consider. Each student and faculty member presented on a different topic and fielded questions from the audience.



Members of the MSU Debate Team with President Lou Anna K. Simon, May 2012.

Over 250 Students Attend Spartan Debate Institutes



Students in the SDI 2-week Hammond/Kirsch lab prepare to take notes.

Now in its twenty-first summer, the Spartan Debate Institutes (SDI) had another strong year with students traveling to Michigan from all over the country. More than two hundred and fifty students journeyed to East Lansing on July 8th for this year's SDI.

The SDI offers programs of four different lengths, ranging from two to four weeks. Curriculum for all students includes:

- Lectures from many of the nation's top high school and college debate coaches;
- Practicum sessions with staff;
- Practice speaking drills and discussions with staff on how to increase their persuasion skills; and
- Full Practice Debates, including a camp-ending tournament for each session of students.

2012 was also the second summer of the joint Hoya Spartan Scholars program, a seven week debate program collaboratively run with Georgetown University. Hoya Spartan seniors included many of the best high school debaters in the country.

Staff members at the SDI come from high school programs and universities all over the country, including prestigious high schools in Georgia, Texas, Florida, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Illinois, and Michigan.



Welcome sign outside of Holmes Hall on MSU's campus.

MSU Wins Freshman / Sophomore Nationals



Evan Hebert and Kaavya Ramesh hold the winning trophy.

The Michigan State University debate team of Kaavya Ramesh and Evan Hebert recently won the Freshman-Sophomore Nationals title. En route to winning the tournament, they defeated teams from the University of Iowa, Northwestern University and the University of Michigan. During the championship round against U-M, the team debated the issue of human rights in Bahrain, specifically the political implications if the U.S. were to intervene.

"We argued that intervening in Bahrain's human rights affairs would be politically risky for President Barack Obama, because we've offered Bahrain aid in the past and they have repeatedly rejected our offers," Ramesh said. "It would also hurt our relationship with the Al-Khalifa monarchy to aid the Bahraini opposition."

"The win is a testament to the hard work of Evan, Kaavya, our coaching staff and the rest of our team," said Casey Harrigan, director of debate. "The teams at Freshman-Sophomore Nationals will be MSU's major competitors for the National Debate Tournament over the next few years, so the win is a great sign for the future."

MSU last won the Freshman-Sophomore Nationals title in 2008.

Thank You Contributors

The MSU Debate Team would like to extend its gratitude to those of you who have recently made generous financial contributions, including:

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- Greta L. Stahl
- Jason and Emily Trice
- Mimi Watstein

If you would like to learn more about how you can increase your involvement with our award-winning program, please contact team Director, Casey Harrigan, at (517) 432-9667 or via email at debate@msu.edu.

Interested in Making a Donation?

A gift to the MSU Debate Team endowment or unrestricted fund will support a program that adds prestige to the academic reputation of Michigan State University. Many of you are former debaters who have experienced the invigorating feeling of competition, and understand the value of having a strong program. Participation in debate proves to be a unique educational experience that teaches students many life skills. A contribution to the program directly supports the learning experiences that make our university great, and equips our students with intellectual and practical knowledge.

To support the program, please consider a gift to the Team's Endowment Fund or Annual Fund. If you have any questions, please contact Katie Cable via email at katie@msu.edu, or via phone at 517-355-2326. To give online, visit givingto.msu.edu/1155. Or by mail, send to Katie Cable, 468 E. Circle Drive, Room 105, East Lansing, MI, 48824.



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