



FY18 SFAC Questionnaire

Speech & Debate

10/12/2016

1. Executive Summary

Mission

The Speech & Debate program cultivates student success through competitive excellence, engaged scholarship and student leadership in the community.

The program accomplishes this mission by:

- › Students compete in intercollegiate tournaments:
 - Policy Debate
 - Speech/Individual Events
 - Mock Trial
- › Expanding the reach of Speech & Debate as a resource for all students.
- › Building on a tradition of success in Speech & Debate competition.
- › Supporting engaged scholarship and public deliberation on issues that matter to the campus community.
- › Equipping students with the necessary tools to advocate and engage in the world.

Benefits to University of Houston Students

Speech and debate are cornerstones of American democracy, activities enshrined in the United States Constitution itself. The cultivation of free speech not only enriches campus life, it is a public trust vital to the city of Houston, the state of Texas, and beyond. This trust has educated Houston mayors, federal judges, and successful professionals in law, business, finance, and numerous other professions. Education in reason, rhetoric, and research is the crucial element that transforms individuals from passive consumers of election-year debates into active and engaged citizens who shape the terms of the national—and global—conversation.

Speech & Debate competition is remarkably effective at harnessing competitive drive in the service of co-curricular student success. The co-curricular nature of Speech & Debate competition creates incentives for academic engagement outside of the classroom that supports student success. Further, competition teaches resilience and drives students to think creatively and innovate in the face of real world challenges.

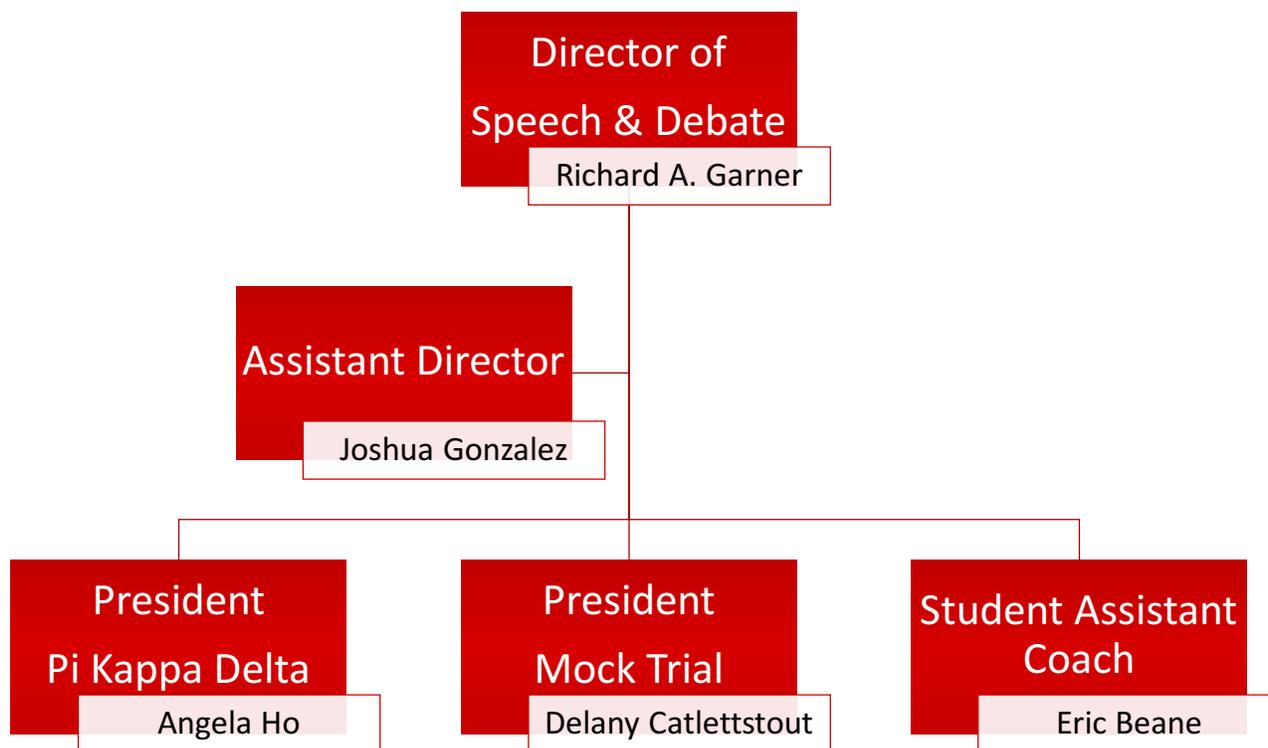
The Speech & Debate program is open to any student, regardless of prior experience. In Fall 2014, half of new team members were novices, a figure true of the Fall of 2016 as well. UH students of all majors can and do participate in the program and represent UH in intercollegiate competition. Access to the program's resources for all students is a priority and as such we are constantly seeking ways to increase capacity and expand participation.

Beyond the students directly involved in tournament competition, the program hosts public debates and participates in community events that seek to expand the impact of our student's engagement with issues that matter to the campus and the world. These public debates help to facilitate dialogue that enhances the campus and community for all students, regardless of their immediate participation in program activities.

UH MAGAZINE:
How did your experiences at UH prepare you for civic leadership?

SYLVESTER TURNER:
I was on the debate team at UH ... I loved being in the Debate Program.

2. Unit Organizational Chart



3. 2015-16 Strategic Initiatives

Relationship to DSAES & University of Houston Strategic Initiatives & Goals

Speech & Debate Strategic initiatives are developed with the broader University and DSAES Initiatives in mind. We prioritize competitive excellence not only because of its educational benefits but also in the services of the University's Goals of *Institutional Excellence* and *National Competitiveness*.

Student Success (UH & DSAES) is another driver of program goals. Speech & Debate's student-driven, inter-disciplinary and co-curricular nature make it an ideal opportunity for students to develop leadership, while also engaging in rigorous academic pursuits. Additionally, the political, philosophical and social topics addressed by Speech & Debate students through competition demand multi-cultural awareness and can help to foster a *Global Learning Community*.

Speech & Debate's partnership with the Houston Urban Debate League (HUDL) develops a *PK-16 Partnership & Community Advancement (UH)* while providing students a service-learning based opportunity for Strategic Initiative Outcomes: 2014-15.

2015-16 Strategic Initiatives

Competitive Excellence

- › **Competitive Success**
Qualify to the National Debate Tournament (NDT) and the American Forensics Association National Individual Events Tournament (AFA-NIET).
- › **Expand Competitive Opportunities**
1000 substantial competitive Speech & Debate instances.

Academic Excellence

- › **Academic Support**
Co-curricular programming and support for debate and speech will expand civic engagement and advocacy resources for University of Houston Students.

Community Engagement

- › **Community Speech & Debate partnerships**
Support Speech & Debate as a educational resource for students in the Houston community, particularly those at-risk.
- › **Support the Houston Urban Debate League (HUDL)**
Create community-engaged learning opportunities for UH students with HUDL.

Strategic Initiative Successes

Competition

The program remained nationally competitive during the 2015-2016 season, despite seeing several seniors end their competitive career in 2014-2015 at the end of the team's first recruiting cycle. The program was ranked 57th nationally by the NDT in 2016 (52nd in Varsity), comparable to its 53rd ranking from 2015. At the end of the fall semester, the site College Debate Ratings noted that UH showed "the largest jump in raw points" over the course of the semester. UH was an octofinalist ("sweet sixteen") at the University of Missouri-Kansas City season opener, and double octofinalist at the University of Texas-Dallas tournament. Debate did not qualify to the 2016 National Debate Tournament (NDT). Success at the NDT is our highest goal and we will work to convert this near-miss into future success.

Mock Trial also experienced competitive success despite limited travel opportunities, placing 1st and 3rd at the OU Sooner Classic. The team won several witness awards, and Shane Smith won the prestigious All-Region Attorney award.

Expand Competitive Opportunities

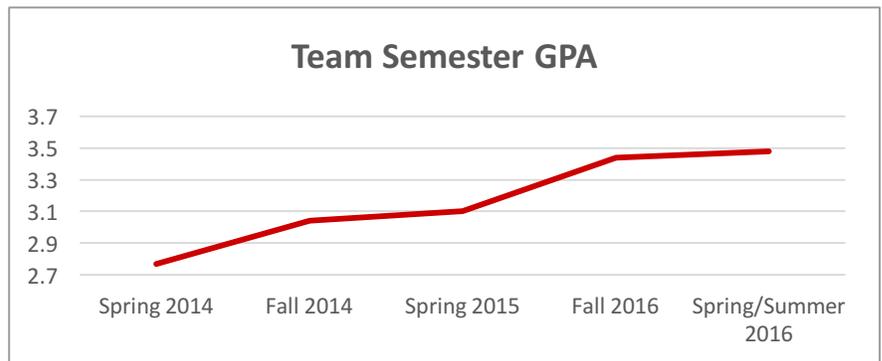
Our goal of expanding competitive tournament opportunities for UH students experienced similar outcomes to FY 15 given continuing resource constraints (see question 5). In FY14, the program did have 1,000 competitive Speech & Debate instances.¹ The difference in FY15/FY16 is explained by the reduction in financial support for travel to tournaments (from \$110,000 in FY14 to \$55,000 in FY15 to \$40,000 in FY16).

Academic Excellence

Academic Support

In 2015-16, the faculty and staff continued their support of undergraduate academic success both in and beyond the classroom. In addition to offering courses in the Leadership Studies Minor (HON 3397, Political Campaign Debates & COMM 1332, Fundamentals of Public Speaking), the program supported student academic

success by facilitating both formal and informal mentoring and advising for team members. These efforts improved the average semester GPA for team members over the first three years of the program.



Community Engagement

Support the Houston Urban Debate League (HUDL)

UH Speech & Debate support of the HUDL continued in FY16. In addition to hosting the HUDL Fall Seminar (bringing in excess of 300 students to campus), UH was host to a week-long residential institute this summer, with approx. 100 HISD students learning and living in Cougar Village.

Community Events

In FY16, in collaboration with local high school teachers and coaches, the Speech & Debate Program hosted a large high school Speech & Debate tournament, the **Cougar Classic**. The tournament is one of only 6 tournaments in Texas to be a qualifying bid to the *Tournament of Champions* and is also a qualifier for the Texas Forensics Association State tournament. The tournament hosted more than 500 students and coaches from over fifty schools representing more than five states on campus. The event is a resource for the regional Speech & Debate community and the HUDL. Community response to the hospitality of UH students and staff in hosting the tournament has been overwhelmingly positive, facilitating recruitment to the Speech & Debate program and to the University more broadly.

¹ Competitive Speech & Debate instances are intercollegiate tournament competition rounds. This concept accounts for both team competition (2-person policy debate teams) and individual events. This metric is described in the response to question four.

4. Assessment & Evaluation

Summary

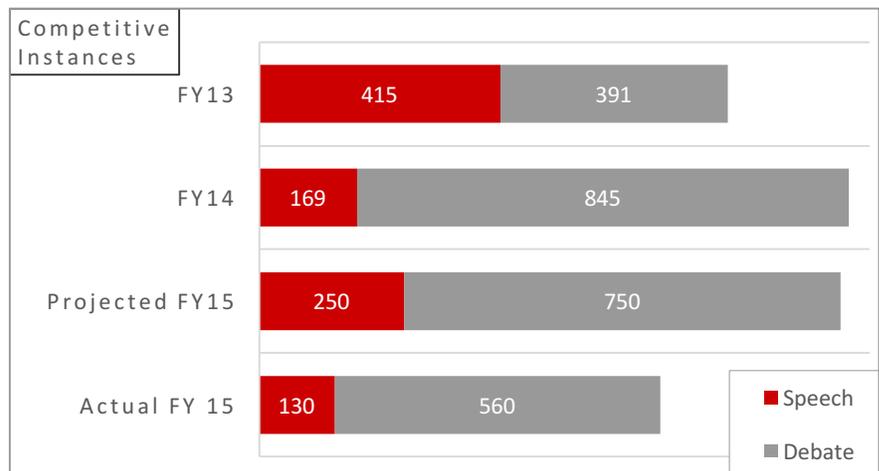
Speech & Debate is one of the most prominent high-impact activities on campus. It offers training in reason, research, and rhetoric that is student driven, and it does so in a manner that increases the visibility of the university nationally and serves hundreds of students in Houston locally. The program's main assessment challenge is the perception that it has an extremely high cost per student. While we have an active plan to increase the number of students involved in the organization, we firmly believe that this perception is in error. Like any nationally competitive team at any university, travel is and will remain expensive. However, a raw cost-per-student to travel metric is in no way representative of the true impact on students. Measuring cost by student-per-tournament (36) dramatically underestimates the total engagement time that each of those tournaments represents (2956 Competitive Impact Hours). Even the more accurate "competitive instances" metric underestimates the number of hours a competitor spends on the activity per debate by more than a factor of four, even using conservative estimates (556 vs. 2956). In other words, contrary to appearances, Speech & Debate has an extremely high tooth-to-tail ratio when it comes to cost; each debate round might be expensive, but the total engagement of each debater over the course of the academic year is substantial. Lastly, while not every student activity can be or should be high-investment, there must of necessity be a set of core, high-impact educational programs on campus to create a Tier 1 experience.² Indeed, the highly-qualified Tier 1 student who has graduated with a high GPA, excellent test scores, and strong extracurriculars in high school speech or debate is choosing between the University of Houston and more established programs at the University of Texas, Baylor, Oklahoma, or Kansas. With appropriate support, we have proven that we *can* compete with those institutions and win.

Limitations

The primary metric for Speech & Debate used in FY16 was competitive instances. While competitive success remains a foundational goal of the program and the central motivator of student engagement, the beauty of debate is that its value is derived from participation itself. Thus, competitive instances better reflect a discrete quantity that demonstrates the immediate impact of competition on individuals (regardless of wins and losses).

Competitive Speech & Debate Instances

Competitive Speech & Debate instances are intercollegiate tournament rounds. This concept accounts for both team competition (2-person policy debate teams) and individual events. As noted in question 2 (above), in FY15 we did not meet the projected 1000 instances. This decrease leads us to question the value of this data, because it suggests that the only means of improving is by increasing the amount of rounds, which may not actually meet program goals.



Competitive Impact (CIX) vs. Competitive Instances (CI)

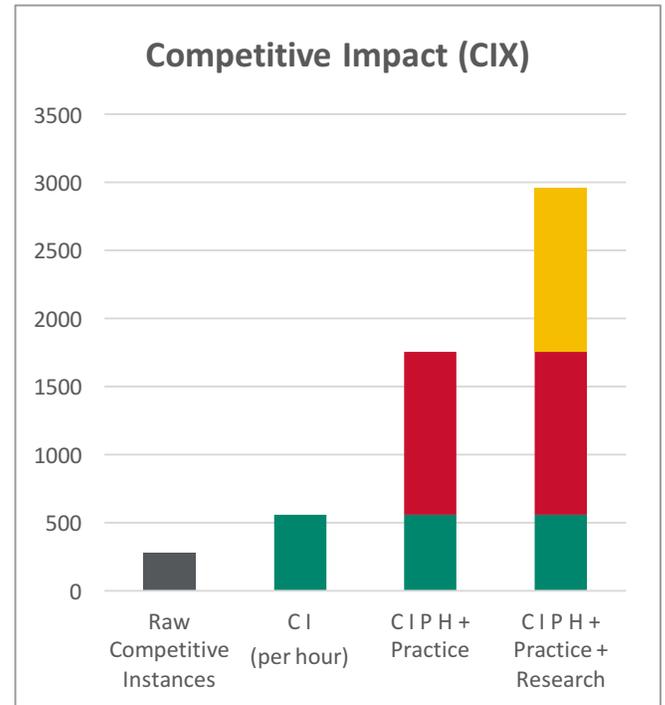
However, as noted in previous SFAC questionnaires, this remains an imperfect measure. Toward this end, the program is developing a new assessment measure we are provisionally calling **competitive impact**. The principal deficiency of the competitive instances rubric is that it represents a small fraction of the amount of time and energy that goes into each

² On the importance of high-impact activities on higher education, see the Association of American Colleges and Universities' position paper by George D. Kuh, "High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter," AAC&U, 2008. <<https://www.aacu.org/leap/hips>>

“instance.” This not only underestimates the engagement level of Speech & Debate members, it artificially inflates the cost per student of the program by several orders of magnitude.

The following chart (“Competitive Impact (CIX)”) reflects this new measure taken from a limited data set, namely, policy debate competitive instances for 20 students in FY 16, 556 total. Competitive Impact includes an estimate of total research and practice per student, and represents a total of **2956 impact hours**. With practice time and research time each estimated at *[Debaters (20) per week (2) per academic year(30)]*, this represents an *extremely conservative* estimate. Many debaters perform that much research (60 hours) during our pre-season preparation sessions, and have performed that much practice (60 hours) before going to our second tournament. Indeed, one scholar has estimated that “the level of rigor and intensity of debate research and preparation over the course of a year” is comparable “to the work involved in completion of masters’ thesis.”³

This also does not include public engagement and debate, mentorship/coaching activities, judging at local high school tournaments, social gatherings, or travel time. The total CIX also does not include estimates for Speech or Mock Trial (see below and question five for details on this gap).



Competitive Impact (CIX) Metric Development

A major administrative initiative this year will be to develop a standardized data set for the CIX metric. This will be a three step process: 1. Assess existing criteria, 2. Define new criteria, 3. Establish data gathering practices for new criteria. Assessment of existing criteria will focus on moving from solid but conservative ad hoc estimates of research and practice to data-based ones (most likely based on student time-tracking). Definition of new criteria will focus on identifying quantifiables for campus engagement and community building activities (see below). The establishment of new data gathering practices will begin by evaluating gaps in past record keeping that prevent incorporating past campus/community activities into the metric as of this time (also see question five re: data gaps for this year). In addition to giving a more complete measure of competitive impact, these metrics will also allow data to be broken out more robustly for competitive impact subsets, such as competition, research, public speaking, campus life (non-speech and debate), and service learning. The Speech & Debate directors will collaborate with and consult UH faculty to set up these assessments, in particular through the Service Learning Task Force of the Honors College.

Campus Engagement & Community Building

A significant limitation of current SFAC assessment of Speech & Debate, primarily via the focus on “cost per student,” is that it leaves out altogether the impact of the program on the surrounding community. DSAES holds collaboration to be one of its core values, and Speech & Debate embodies “the spirit of collaboration through mutually beneficial partnerships on campus and in surrounding environments.” The program serves that community through two major initiatives, the Houston Debate Mentorship Collaborative and the Cougar Classic Speech & Debate tournament.

Cougar Classic

Our tournament is a cornerstone of the high school speech and debate community in greater Houston. It is the premier tournament in the city, attracts hundreds of students to our campus, and draws not only students from all over the state but from surrounding states as well. This provides both intrinsic benefits (the education and training of the competitors) and extrinsic ones (a major PR event for the university with a group of engaged, Tier 1-quality prospective students).

³ Gordon R. Mitchell, “Pedagogical Possibilities for Argumentative Agency in Academic Debate,” *Argumentation & Advocacy* 35.2 (1998): 41-61. Mitchell is Associate Professor; Assistant Dean, University Honors College; and Associate Professor of Clinical and Translational Science at the University of Pittsburgh.

Figure 3

Houston Debate Mentorship Collaborative

The new name for our partnership with the Houston Urban Debate League, the Speech & Debate program's Houston Debate Mentorship Collaborative (HDMC) serves hundreds of HISD students through both individual mentorship, tournament judging, and summer workshops. This work is a direct service to our local communities that leverages our institutional expertise to create new educational opportunities for middle and high school students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

Future Assessment

To make the impact of this work more visible starts with Speech & Debate. Toward that end, the program must incorporate its work in these areas into its data sets and assessment criteria. To begin, UH student participation in campus engagement and community building will be incorporated into our CIX assessment (see above). Next, baseline participation data will be collated and presented for these activities in a more consistent manner. Finally, we will attempt to develop a community-engagement analogue to CIX to measure the true impact of these programs. This last step will begin with the HDMC, developing criteria to assess its impact as service learning program.

Student Participation

These numbers represent the amount of students who are affiliated in some capacity with the program. Some of these students represent the competitive "traveling team," while other are engaged in learning the basics of debate or involved in our campus engagement or community building programs. As noted above, we are developing metrics to more accurately quantify engagement for students who have not yet advanced to the traveling team or who primarily participate in our campus and community outreach. At the moment, the number one barrier to increasing participation is funding.

Year	Students
FY13	33
FY14	60
FY15	80
FY16	80

Community Participation

The substantial community participation the program engendered last year has been mentioned earlier, and is listed below.

- **500** high school competitors, judges and coaches at the Cougar Classic tournament.
- **100** HISD students at the HUDL Summer Institute.
- More than **300** HISD students in attendance at the Fall HUDL seminar held on campus.

5. Budget & Organizational Changes

Leadership Changes

The program has undergone a significant administrative change from last year to this. Richard A. Garner was appointed Interim Director of Speech & Debate after former director Sarah Spring stepped down. During this transition, Assistant Director Joshua Gonzalez has taken on additional duties. While there will be minimal disruption to most program activities, this transition has delayed the timeframe for implementing certain long-term initiatives and, more importantly for the purpose of this report, has created some gaps in assessment data that will delay updating certain aforementioned metrics.

Budget Challenges

As described in our FY15-FY17 requests, the combined Speech and Debate Program at UH possesses a significantly larger number of members than they did when the two separate programs were combined. While the consolidation of the two programs has helped to eliminate some redundancies and realize savings in some areas, much of this has been made moot by recent budget allocations. The team's growth has created needs which, when combined with continued constraints on financial resources for FY17, have presented numerous challenges. These pressures will limit our ability to sustain program goals and expand access to more UH students. For example, in the absence of the one-time FY17 request, we will be forced to curtail travel yet again.

At current levels, our roster of 80 students is coached and administratively supported by two part-time positions (all of the team's coaches are also University faculty with teaching and service commitments in the Honors College). In our supplementary requests, we have indicated the need for a Speech-specific coaching position, whether it be staff-level, part time, or a graduate assistantship position. Without such support, the Speech component of the program will remain limited in the absence of trained support and assistance.

Goal Redefinitions

Per the change in directorship, the goals outlined in question seven have been redefined from the previous years' questionnaires. While retaining nearly all of the previous goals, this redefinition places slightly different emphases on program development, particularly with regard to campus engagement and community building.

Mock Trial

The incorporation of the Mock Trial program continues to be an ongoing organizational change. The Mock Trial program had existed separately from the Speech & Debate program for six years previous to FY16. Last fall, the Mock Trial program approached the Speech & Debate program and suggested a partnership. Though we compete in different activities and attract different students, we have similar missions and logistical processes. Participants of the program learn many U.S. Federal Courtroom procedures and develop key mental and oratorical skills. The primary function of the program is to compete in tournaments against other universities using a detailed legal case. The Mock Trial program's roster currently consists of 19 students. This shift remains both incomplete and challenging due to the lack of funding for the program, which requires that it remain autonomous to some degree relative to the rest of the program.

6. 2017-2018 Strategic Initiatives

Competitive Success

The Speech & Debate program will seek to achieve competitive success at intercollegiate Speech & Debate tournaments. These competitive opportunities will be available for students at all levels of debate or speech experience. By building upon the strong academic foundation available to University of Houston students, the program will aim to consistently succeed at the highest competitive levels, particularly against Top-Tier Research Universities. Due to our leadership transition and natural recruitment cycles, the team's goals this year are primarily to maintain competition levels from the previous year and to cultivate and nurture young talent.

Action Steps

1. Sustain and grow overall program participation levels.
2. Sustain and develop high-quality competitive opportunities for students.
3. Focus on providing more robust travel opportunities for Speech competitors in spite of resource constraints.
4. Begin to establish stronger infrastructure to facilitate the Mock Trial program.

Campus Engagement

In addition to our ongoing co-curricular programs that link academic and student programs, the program will reemphasize its commitment to campus engagement across the university as well as within its institutional home, The Honors College. Already this semester, the team has hosted presidential debate events and has scheduled a public debate (11/4) on the four major candidates' position on climate change in the upcoming election.

Action Steps

1. Collaborate with campus and community partners to host events (presidential debate watch parties) and dialogue surrounding the 2016 Presidential Debates.
2. Engage the broader university committee by supporting engaging intellectual issues through public debates
3. Implement a new service-learning component to the program, primarily through the Houston Debate Mentorship Collaborative, an initiative which is also receiving support from the Honors College Service Learning Taskforce.
4. Create co-curricular programs that develop civic engagement, leadership and advocacy resources for UH students.
5. Sustain robust advising and academic support for team members in collaboration with Honors College and University faculty.

Community Engagement

Speech & Debate will continue to cultivate community engagement through building robust partnerships with community partners. Our primary programs will continue to be the Cougar Classic and the Houston Debate Mentorship Collaborative. The former provides a core service to Houston civil society by providing a flagship competitive opportunity in the city of Houston, while the latter reaffirms our commitment to service in and collaboration with the communities surrounding UH.

Action Steps

1. Reaffirm our commitment to the HUDL by reorganizing previous initiatives under the umbrella of the Houston Debate Mentorship Collaborative, including mentoring activities, teaching workshops, and summer camps.
2. Continue to support the HUDL and expand collaboration in supporting their capacity as a non-profit educational institution to support debate in Houston.
3. Support local debate education by continuing to host the Cougar Classic, and reaffirming the commitment to providing the premier competitive tournament in the Houston area.

7. Funding Sources

Funding from Student Fees, to the greatest extent possible, is directed towards student activities. For instance, student fees are used to fund student competition, campus programming, and student workers. Support for administration, faculty salaries, and operational expenses that do not directly support student activities are primarily funded through Academic Affairs and the Honors College.

Current Initiatives

The program is continuously working on advancement to develop future financial support through corporate partnerships and private giving from alumni and friends of Speech & Debate. To this end, in August 2015, we hosted an alumni gathering in honor of Dr. Bill English (UH Debate coach from 1965-1974) that we hope will be a foundation for developing alumni support for the program. By their nature, these efforts take time and will not result in rapid changes to the financial position of the program.



****Dr. Bill English with alumni
Sylvester Turner and Larry
Doherty, August 2015***

Mock Trial

In the past year, the Mock Trial program has focused on developing an active fundraising program. They have established a Director of Fundraising role on their Executive Board and are utilizing two primary and two secondary methods of raising funds. These include near weekly food sales, t-shirt sales, and donation requests. Specifically, the program has set goals of holding 13 edible product sales, 1-2 t-shirt sale drives, launching a Kickstarter page, and contacting 75 prospective donors. However, despite these significant efforts, the Mock Trial program's fundraising is still only able to cover a small percentage of their expenses (projections for this year are \$1,500 - \$3,000). Furthermore, the program is not eligible for AFB funding due to a provision in the AFB bylaws that prohibits funding for travel to competitions.

New Initiatives

The team will focus on two new funding sources in the near to medium term. First, investigating potential revenue streams from the Cougar Classic is a priority of the new administration. While concrete numbers remain too tentative to present here, the hope is to create opportunities in both fee structure and concessions to help create a sustainable financial foundation for the team. Second, the team is investigating creating a summer camp for middle and high school students. The administration is already investigating the feasibility of starting the camp this summer, but with competitors in Austin, Dallas, and Denton, this project will be an ongoing project into the medium-term.

A Note on Diversity & Fundraising

While Speech & Debate believes that there is a prominent and necessary place for external fund-raising, we have serious reservations about relying on a funding model that relies on fund raising and membership dues. While good as stopgap measures, the substantial burdens on time and energy such a funding model requires raises questions about accessibility of the program to students of diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The diversity goals of both the UH and DSAES are actively hindered by overreliance on such a model because they create a direct tradeoff which many students are not privileged enough to make. We feel it is our duty to make debate available to all; to do so requires institutional support.

8. Overlapping Services

To our knowledge, there are no similar student activities in the University. The unification of University of Houston Forensic Society, Speech & Debate, and Mock Trial has created a home for Speech & Debate competition at UH in our program.