



SAN DIEGO STATE
UNIVERSITY



Aztec Forensics – On An Upward Trajectory

A Distinguished Program

SDSU has one of the top Communication schools in the country, and a key element of its success is our award-winning Speech and Debate program, *Aztec Forensics*. Launched in the mid-1940s, Aztec Forensics is one of the most distinguished and long-standing organizations on campus. This dynamic program has drawn bright minds from all walks of college life, enhancing their education through intercollegiate debate competition at regional and national levels. Former Aztec Forensics members have gone on to make their marks in a variety of careers, and most credit the skills they learned in the forensics program as critical to their success.



“I was a member of Aztec Forensics for 3 years and it was amazing! I learned so many great skills, from critical thinking to how to think on my feet.” – Dave Shaw ‘91, Senior Vice President, Marketing, Fox Home Entertainment

Aztec Forensics has had a successful fall season with the addition of our newest School of Communication graduate teaching associates, Shan Cureton, Darron Devillez, Kendra Straub, and Nick Stump, alongside our returning graduate teaching and administrative associates Justin Perkins and Will Silberman. Furthermore, our new Director of Forensics, Marquesa Cook-Whearty, has brought her previous experience as a School of Communication graduate teaching associate to take Aztec Forensics to new heights. We are thrilled to provide and foster the growth of over five formats of debate as well as all twelve styles of competitive speaking events.

“My most exciting memory [of SDSU] was being on the Forensics team and Varsity baseball team at the same time. Sometimes the schedules would coincide and I’d compete in Speech and Debate and then play a meaningful baseball game on the same day.” – Randy Bernstein, President & CEO, Premier Partnerships

Team Success

Aztec Forensics is currently ranked in the top 10% of more than 700 institutions in the United States, and still holds the national record for consecutive qualifications to the National Debate Tournament.

The forensics team's season lasts nearly the entire academic year, with a total of 27 tournaments that take place from September to April. In the 2016-2017 academic year, the team achieved high-level national competitiveness. Since August, Forensics students have competed all across the country. Two of the four students, Tori Mudd and Nicci Stebbins, qualified to compete at the American Forensics Association's highly-competitive national tournament, after earning multiple first place awards. Students have taken debate wins in three different forms of debate, and are looking forward to a wonderful spring season. The top students represent San Diego State at national tournaments, such as the National Parliamentary Debate Association's National Tournament in Colorado, the United States Universities Debating Championships in Colorado, and the National Debate Tournament in Kansas.

-  This year, the team has 25 competing members. The team competes in policy and parliamentary debate as well as individual events and interpretive events.
-  The 2016 Aztec Invitational was held over the course of three days. There were 46 schools and almost 300 students in attendance. Close to 120 volunteers from the School of Communication and over 200 competitors made the Invitational a great success. Julian Tuzzeo and Alan Fishman (Diablo Valley College) went 5:1 and broke to Octo Final in Parli, Nathan Leigh and Slade Baker were 1 point away from breaking in BP, and Nicci Stebbins took 2nd place in ADS and Tori Mudd took 1st place in Info.
-  Six competitors competed at Colorado College in the Rocky Mountain Classic in Pueblo, Colorado. In individual events, placements included: after dinner speaking-Nicci Stebbins 2nd place, prose-Nicci Stebbins 4th place, impromptu- Nicci Stebbins 1st place, info-Tori Mudd 1st place, prose Tori Mudd 2nd place, Debate NPDA: Nathan Rogers and Andrea Sanchez- broke to quarters, Julian Tuzzeo and Trevor Johnson- finished 3-3.
-  SDSU Speech and Debate had a second successful weekend at Colorado College. Slade Baker and Nathan Rogers were semi-finalist at the Colorado College BP tournament.
-  The team competed at Concordia College in the Jannese Davidson Free Tournament and were proud to have several students place: Nicci Stebbins took 1st place in Open ADS, Tori Mudd took 1st place in Open Informative, Nicci Stebbins took 4th place in Open Impromptu, and Rachel Gurovich and Genevieve Aguilar were Octofinalist in Open Parli. In addition, there were two sweepstakes awards: Nicci Stebbins took 2nd place speaker and SDSU finished 4th place sweeps in the 4yr division.
-  Most recently at Cal State Northridge, the policy teams did very well with speaker awards for Alisha Chand, who won 10th place speaker, and Esau Eleazar Cortez, who won 2nd place speaker. Esau Cortez and his partner Kodee Besjovec went to quarterfinals in Novice policy. In



IE's Nicci Stebbins had an amazing weekend and took 1st place in both ADS and Impromptu on Saturday and took 2nd place in ADS.

New Vitality



Aztec Forensics is positioned to become a nationally top-ranked program.

New, full-time, Director of Forensics, Marquesa Cook Whearty, began her forensics career at Palomar College, where she earned multiple silver and gold medals in debate and individual events. After transferring to UC San Diego (UCSD), she became the Director of Forensics of the student-run organization where she and her debate partner earned a first round bid to the NPTE and finished in the top 30 teams at NPDA. After graduating from UCSD, Marquesa took a few years off to start her family and then accepted a position as a Graduate Teaching Assistant at SDSU under the tutelage of Dr. Sharon Taylor. During her time as a grad student, she worked very closely with Dr. Taylor learning how to run and manage a nationally-ranked Speech and Debate team. Upon graduation from SDSU, Marquesa accepted a full time tenure track position at Palomar College. After one year, Marquesa was thrilled to accept the Director of Forensics position at SDSU. She is thrilled to return to SDSU and direct the award-winning program. Her plan for development of a nationally competitive team at SDSU includes:

-  Hosting the “Aztec Invitational” tournament, a great opportunity to showcase SDSU’s forensics program to potential recruits from the community college and high school sectors.
-  Establishing a peer-mentoring program to help train the next generation of nationally-competitive students.
-  Increasing the number of debate teams and individual events competitors, resulting in a competitive core team of about 14 students, with most of them routinely traveling their respective circuits. Having more core students will help SDSU achieve sweepstakes awards, increase competitive opportunities within the team, and help to push the team toward more success.
-  Focusing on success in NPDA debate, NFA LD debate, and AFA-NIET individual events, providing critical national exposure necessary for student success.
-  Bringing 2 -3 teams to national tournaments in the 2016-2017 school year, funds permitting.

“I am thrilled to work in a department that fosters greatness within the faculty as well as the graduate students. The ability to offer a full service team participating in 5 different leagues is a dream come true!!”

– Marquesa Cook Whearty, Director of Aztec Forensics.

Funding Priorities to Support the Vision and Future of the SDSU Forensics Program

With the right amount of support and investment we could produce "the" national championship team in a couple of years. By developing a nationally top-ranked team we would achieve a number of things; first and foremost is the experience, training and life-long skills it would provide for the students participating in Speech and Debate. With a highly-successful team, we would be able to recruit more of the top-ranked high school debaters, which would further strengthen the program.

We need to provide the resources necessary to develop the Forensics team. To recruit the best debaters from high school and community college programs, we must provide a few key things, the scholarships to attend and the funding to support a well-resourced team. This includes providing a great coach and an appropriate number of graduate assistants, along with the funds to participate in a wide range of local, national and international tournaments.

We have identified five key priorities to develop a nationally ranked team:

-  Scholarships to recruit and retain talent
-  Scholarships to fund out-of-state tuition
-  Increased travel budget
-  Increase the ratio of Graduate Assistants to team members
-  Endowed Debate Coach position

Student Scholarships

Scholarships provide students with access to educational opportunities that would otherwise be limited. At SDSU, scholarships can be used to recruit new students, partially fund tuition, support international study, or guarantee an opportunity to participate in an internship.

- *A gift of \$2,000+ per year will provide for a student scholarship award,*
- *A \$15,000 pledge over three years will name a scholarship fund,*
- *A \$50,000 pledge over five years will create a named endowed scholarship.*
A planned gift can also be made for both of these scholarships.*

Forensics Team Travel

Support for the team's participation at the local, state and national level would allow team members to compete on behalf of SDSU. These funds support team travel, and are used to offset airfare, gasoline, hotels and per diem costs for students traveling to compete on behalf of SDSU.

- *A gift of \$250 will cover hotel costs for two students for an average of two nights.*
- *A gift of \$500 will offset the cost for roundtrip cross-country airfare for one student to attend a national competition.*
- *A gift of \$1,000 will help to offset airfare and hotel for up to four students to attend and in-state competition.*
- *A gift of a \$15,000 pledge over three years will name a forensics travel fund.*
- *A \$50,000 pledge over five years will create a named forensics travel fund.*
A planned gift can also be made for both of these funds.*

Gifts of any amount made to [San Diego State University's Forensics Fund](#) will support areas of greatest need within the program.

**A bequest, life insurance, retirement accounts, or appreciated stock or real estate can all be used to achieve your philanthropic goals.*

For more information on planned giving, creating a scholarship, or endowing a fund, please contact:

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