

University Forensics working to remain one of nation's best

By Andrew Lamar
Of the Emerald

Well-dressed men and women wielding formidable attache cases invaded the EMU last weekend to compete in this year's first major Northwest Forensics Conference tournament.

The University team debated its way to place first overall out of the 55 schools that competed in the tournament. Three NFC designated competitions remain for this year. The conference, which is one of nine such tournaments in the country, will cover Alaska, Washington, Idaho and Oregon.

The performance of this year's team is nothing new for the University, however, which has a well-known reputation for its forensics program. In fact, the first intercollegiate debate in the United States was between the University and Willamette University, located in Salem, in 1896.



David Frank

Since then forensics has flourished at the University, which has been recognized nationally for its program. In 1969 the University's forensic team had the distinction of being the number one overall ranked team in the nation.

In a recent rating of forensic programs published last spring, the University ranked 32nd out of more than 800 schools.

"I think we're better than

that," says David Frank, director of the University forensics program. "It's very hard to compare peaches and oranges," he says.

The forensic team has more than 40 members and is one of the largest programs in the nation. One of the main reasons so many people are involved in the program is because of its reputation, says David Long, a member of the debate team who finished fourth at the national debate tournament held last spring in Reno, Nev.

"I'd say first of all, its because of the quality of the program that it is successful," Long says. "Second of all, I think it is because the program has a reputation for what I call openness, a sort of 'anyone can come and we'll all have a good learning experience together' attitude."

Long says other programs can be very elitist and can take an attitude of "either win or get out." He says this is not the case at the University.

"Many directors of forensics and others from outside the program have said that David Frank has managed to strike the perfect balance between the different events and the emphasis," says Rick Peacor, Long's debate partner.

Frank even encourages complete novices of forensic competition to get involved and be a part of the University's team, Peacor says.

Novices begin at the inexperienced level and may then move up to the intermediate or championship levels of collegiate competition.

In forensics there are two separate types of competition: Individual Events and Oregon Cross-Examination debating. The Individual Events encompass 10 different categories of competition ranging from impromptu to persuasive speaking.

Oregon Cross-Examination debating is a style of debate developed at the University more than 100 years ago and used nationwide for debate competition. This type of debating involves four people, two on

each team.

One team is assigned the affirmative side of an issue and the other team is assigned the negative side of the issue. Each speaker then delivers an eight minute speech, which is followed by an opponent's cross-examination and a four minute rebuttal.

The issue debated is chosen



Rick Peacor

by the Cross-Examination Debate Association, the governing body for debate in the nation. The same issue is used nationwide for all debate.

This fall the issue is whether or not the government should place restrictions on U.S. media coverage of terrorist activities. A new debate topic will be assigned in January, which will be used for winter and spring.

Any forensic competition at the collegiate level requires dedication, but cross-examination debating requires almost a fanatical commitment. After CEDA announced this fall's debate topic, members of the debate team could be found in the library practically any hour of the day, researching the topic.

Mike Sistrom, a member of the debate team, says most debaters spent about six hours a day researching the topic before their first tournament, which was held the first weekend of

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