

Forensics team ranked sixth

By Amy Columbo
Oregon Daily Emerald

Forensics Director David Frank is impressed with the hard work and dedication displayed by students of the forensics team.

"We tend to attract very hard-working students who sometimes spend more time on debate than they should," he said.

"I've replaced my life with debate and classes," longtime team member Lewil Shedd said.

The sacrifice has paid off. The debate component of the University's 25-member speech team is currently rated sixth in the country, is the top team in the Pacific Northwest and is the best debate program in Oregon.

The team is ranked by the National Cross Examination Debate Association, and 250 other colleges and universities across the United States are included in the association.

Frank said he is almost reluctant to disclose the team's national status.

"I try not to make it too much of a big deal about being sixth in the country," he said. "It means people all of a sudden say to be a good program, you have to be nationally ranked. That's a very dangerous piece of information. I give it out, and I'm proud of it; but I'm also reluctant, because I know what that can do."

Most importantly, Frank said the makings of a good forensics program are, "people who are honest and are not so intoxicated by trophies and so addicted to competition that they lose track of what they should be learning."

Instead, Frank wants his team, "to be caring about their audiences, about their team members, and then to know so much about their topics that they feel comfortable giving an opinion with good evidence."

"Then if they don't win, that's OK, because they have learned," Frank said with a smile.

The forensics team is an umbrella team that includes both individual events and debate. Any student who is in good standing with the University can be involved. Students enrolled in the graded two-credit class, Special Topics in Forensics 406 H, make up the forensics team. The

team attends between 17 and 20 tournaments during the year.

Team member Isaac Gottesman describes debate as, "frustrating yet awkwardly exhilarating." He said debate is a paradox for him. At times the stress can be too much and he hates it, but at other times the adrenaline of conquering the competition is overwhelming, and Gottesman loves it.

The team recently returned from the Western Washington Tournament. As a whole, the University was very successful at the tournament, bringing home several trophies, including second, third and fifth place team trophies, as well as four individual debate speaker awards.

"The difference between us and other teams is that we do a lot of outside research," Shedd said.

Shedd estimates that he spends 20 to 30 hours a week in the library researching. Likewise, Gottesman, said preparation especially intensifies just before tournaments. He said he was up until 4 in the morning preparing before the Washington tournament.

Frank said the evolution of technology has greatly affected the debate world. He has been involved as the director of the forensics program at the University since 1981 and attributes the power of the on-line library research database, NEXIS/LEXIS, to this transformation.

"Some people will go back to their hotel rooms, plug their laptops into NEXIS/LEXIS and they'll have evidence against the other team's affirmative case that is the next day," Frank said. "So they're post-dating each other by hours sometimes."

Frank said some teams use the database as their only form of research, which leads to superficial research. He believes NEXIS/LEXIS should be used only to supplement a student's research process. Books, journal articles and talks with experts are all important to understanding, interpreting and arguing the debate issue.

"I would like to see people be humane and ethical debaters," said Stephen Stolp, assistant

director of forensics. "I would like to strive to teach them not to be offensive, to speak in front of a group persuasively, and to answer arguments directly, honing their critical thinking skills."

Forensics team members recognize the fact that being involved is an extensive time commitment. But Shedd described the team as a social environment as well.

"They become like extended family," Shedd said. He attributes it to the fact that the group spends so much time together.

Gottesman said debate is very educational for him; in fact, probably more than anything else he has learned in school.

"I've had many former students come back and say that their participation in forensics was fundamental and basic to their professional achievements," Frank said.

Such is the case for Shedd. He originally joined the team in hopes of becoming more successful as a lawyer. Through participation in debate, his original educational goals have changed.

Shedd now hopes that upon graduation, he will be hired for the position of an associate director of forensics at a college or university with a forensics reputation of excellence.

The forensics team travels to several schools across the United States to seek competition. It has a yearly budget that covers the cost of travel, accommodations, entrance fees and some meal expenses. Frank said it is a challenge to budget enough money to last the duration of the year.

The team has a fund-raiser at the end of February and hosts a high school forensics competition that brings about 600 students to the campus for competition.

"I think it (forensics) is one of the few programs on campus in which people are passionately committed to finding good research about public policy issues," Frank said. "And it's an activity which encourages people to argue with great passion and energy about their positions. You either believe what you are saying or sit down and shut up."

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INTERESTED STUDENTS ARE INVITED TO PLAN THEIR SPRING-TERM COURSE SCHEDULES at the RUSSIAN ARENA

A meeting just before "Duck Call"
Wednesday, February 16,
3:00-5:00 (15:00-17:00) EMU, Cedar E

Teaching faculty will make brief presentations on specific courses. The Department offers many opportunities for students who have no knowledge of Russian to learn about Russian literature and culture, and the background to astonishing, recent events in the Slavic world. Professors will be available for individual discussion.

The following courses with lectures and readings in English are open to all students this spring.

AN INTRODUCTION TO RUSSIAN LITERATURE (a group-satisfying humanities course). 3 credits, 11:00 MWF. A. Leong or K. Hokanson.

TOLSTOY. 3 credits, 12:00-12:50 MWF. J. Rice

IMAGINING RUSSIAN WOMEN. RUSS 407/507. 3 credits, 14:00-16:50 W.K. Hokanson

SEM: RUSSIAN NOVEL AND WORLD LITERATURE. COLT 407/507. 4 credits, 12:30-13:50 UH. J. Rice

Additionally this spring students have the unique opportunity to study with one of the most famous figures of 20th-century Russian literary and social history, Andrei Sinyavsky, who will be Lindholm Endowed Professor of Russian Language, Literature and Culture.

SOVIET CIVILIZATION. 3 credits, 15:00-17:00 Thursday. In Russian with simultaneous English translation. The Russian Revolution grew out of a Europe-wide spiritual crisis and radically transformed the Russian world view, psychology, language, and culture - high and low. A. Sinyavsky.

Sinyavsky will also be a central participant in a public symposium titled "Culture and Revolution: Russian Civilization Before, During, and After the Soviet Era." UO students will have an opportunity to join in this symposium via a special course.

CULTURE AND REVOLUTION. 2-3 credits, April 29 - May 7 or April 29 - May 1. In Russian with simultaneous English translation. Panel Discussions, art exhibits, concerts, films, lectures and presentations by a wide variety of internationally-known figure. A. Leong (coordinator.)

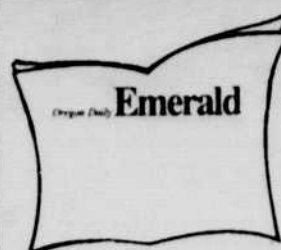
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