



Ben Garvey for the Emerald

Debate team members Alan Tauber and Heidi Ford, both political science majors, won the National Tournament of Excellence award.

Debate team emerge victorious

■ A University Forensics team won a national debate tourney at Whitman College

By Lisa Toth
Oregon Daily Emerald

The clock was ticking and University students Alan Tauber and Heidi Ford only had 25 minutes to prepare for a critical debate that would last about 40 minutes.

Before the showdown began, the team and other members of the University's Forensics Program buried themselves in files and advocacy pieces they would use to strengthen their argument.

Once the stopwatch ran out 40 minutes later, Tauber, a senior political science major, and Ford, a junior political science major, emerged as the nation's top parliamentary debate team. Tauber and Ford took home the national championship at the first National Parliamentary Tournament of Excellence, April 27 to 29, which was hosted by Whitman College in Walla Walla, Wash.

The duo defeated some of the best debate teams in the nation, including their competitor in the final round, the team from the U.S. Air Force Academy. Tauber and Ford had to make it through six preliminary rounds and five elimination rounds.

During their final elimination round, Tauber and Ford argued against jury nullification, which means the jury has the authority to repeal laws it sees as

unjust. Going into the competition, Tauber said he and Ford had high expectations. They were ranked sixth in the nation when they entered the tournament, but they had been ranked in the top 10 all year. Only the top 48 teams in the country were invited to attend the tournament.

The University Forensics Program, which is 125 years old, belongs to the National Parliamentary Debate Association, and this school year it has participated in intercollegiate parliamentary debates nationwide.

Professor David Frank, director of the Honors College, said he's proud of the winning team because they represent a "long tradition of intercollegiate debating excellence" at the University.

Frank said Michael Nguyen, a sophomore computer science major, and Damon Martichuski, a sophomore international studies major who also qualified for the tournament, finished the year in 32nd place. Frank, who also serves as the director of forensics education, said the team's "well-honed" debating skills, natural talent, experience and hard work make them "clearly the best team in the country."

Ford said she and Tauber have a great partnership, and she could not have won the tournament without him.

"It was the last tournament that Alan and I had to debate together," Ford said. "We've had more suc-

cesses together than with any other partners. It was a wonderful way to go out of our debating season."

Director of Intercollegiate Forensics Rick Peacor, along with assistant coaches Nick Lougee and Pete Mohn, are all former debaters. Ford said they were an integral part of the team's success not only because they were a "great cheering section," but because they brought their experience as debaters and judges to the winning team.

Ford said her future goals at the University include working in forensics as a coach on a collegiate level and attending law school.

Tauber, who has been debating for eight years — including four at the University — serves as a clerk at the Lane County Courthouse. He said his experience helped the team become more familiar with the legal system, which strengthened their debating tactics. After graduation, Tauber is headed for law school.

Ford, who has been on the University's debate team for three years, added that debating helps participants feel more comfortable speaking in public and improves research skills in topics ranging from U.S. foreign policy to campaign finance reform.

"You feel informed about what you are going to debate. I think that's a really useful skill no matter what you do," Ford said. "It keeps your nose in the papers."

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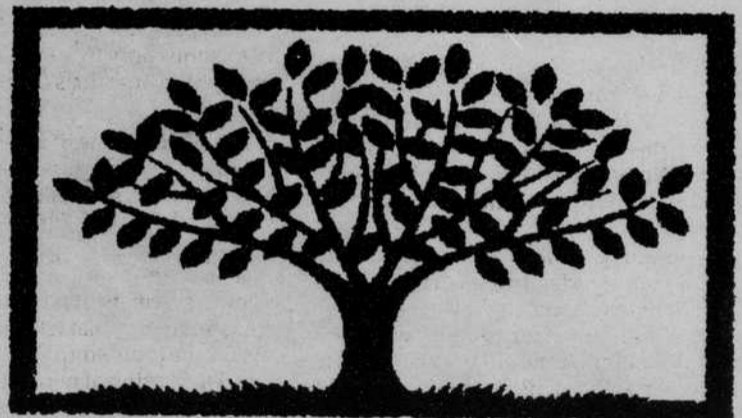
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