



September 19, 2014

Dear College Debate Community,

As a group of current and former collegiate debaters and coaches, the Women's Debate Institute (WDI) is concerned about debate team environments that condone, promote, or overlook harassment. Creating inclusive and diverse teams requires not just reacting to issues when they arise, but proactively fostering environments that are harassment-free. In order to counteract harassment in team environments, the WDI would like to join with the Cross Examination Debate Association Executive Council in encouraging Directors and Coaches to engage in the following best practices:

1. Directors/Coaches should obtain and print an up-to-date copy of the school code of conduct for each team member. The student code of conduct is usually available online.
2. Directors/Coaches should review the school code of conduct with all members of the debate team. During this review, special attention should be paid to anti-harassment policies. For example, a small excerpt from the Idaho State University Code of Conduct states:

Harassment of any student is absolutely forbidden. It is inimical to the purpose of the University and violates state and federal laws and the rules and governing policies and procedure of the University. There are several forms of harassment, all of which are prohibited at Idaho State University. Harassment generally is the malicious or intentional act(s) of hostile, disturbing, or pestering behavior or speech (oral or written) that has the effect of bringing physical harm or substantial emotional distress, or seriously limits an individual's life activities. A violation may include conduct towards another person or persons including, but not limited to, an individual's academic performance, or living conditions, or participation in a University activity;

1. unwelcome comments or other behavior that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment for that individual's work, education, living conditions, or participation in a University activity; conduct complaint or against any person or

2. retaliation against any person filing a participating in the conduct process;

3. implied or stated threats of violence.

Harassment can occur in an employment setting or in other settings and it can occur between students or from a faculty or staff member to a student, or vice versa. In the employment setting, federal and state law, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, The Age Discrimination in Employment Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act, make it

unlawful to harass a person based on their race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, or physical or mental disability. Each of these types of harassment is also misconduct under this Student Conduct Code.

If you do not feel credentialed to provide such a review, invite a member of your university's compliance office to review your school's policy with the team during a meeting.

3. In the case that a Director/Coach has a team code of conduct, students should be required to sign both the team code of conduct and the school code of conduct. We encourage teams to have a cooperative discussion among coaches and students about how their team's code of conduct can be more specific to unique issues presented by debate travel and competition.
4. Directors/Coaches should require each student to initial all pages of the student code and to sign the following statement (attached as a word doc):

I certify that I have read the [Insert School Name] Student Code (attached). I have initialed each page of the code. I understand that I am bound by this code as a student at [Insert School Name]. I agree to abide by all provisions of the code while representing or travelling with the [Insert School Name] debate team for any purpose (e.g. observing, judging, coaching, debating). I understand that the student code applies to students representing [Insert School Name] and to any student participating in a [Insert School Name] sponsored activity or travelling with a [Insert School Name] sponsored group or representing [Insert School Name] while away from campus.

Signature /Date

Please print name

5. Directors/Coaches should keep each student's signed code of conduct on file.
6. In the case of student misconduct, Directors/Coaches should follow the procedures outlined in the student code of conduct.

The WDI and the CEDA EC believe that following these simple steps can significantly reduce incidents of harassment in the debate community by making students aware of conduct expectations. Clear review of codes of conduct educates students about expectations for behavior and, should an incident of harassment occur, it enables those who have been harassed to respond. The WDI and the CEDA EC believe that creating a harassment-free environment on debate teams is the best method to promote student safety, growth, and learning, and to protect debate programs.

Please join us in continuing to work toward an environment where all our students can thrive.

Sincerely,

The Women's Debate Institute
The CEDA Executive Council