



PATRIOT DEBATE TEAM

Handbook

2024 EDITION

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE DEBATE TEAM?

At DBU Debate, the cultivation of informed thought is seen as a Biblical directive tied back to 2 Timothy 1:7. Here, Christians are encouraged to share the light of God, being told that, “God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind.” Through a focus on training and involvement in competitive debate, team membership seeks to fulfill this charge through our mission statement:

Inspiring speakers for Christ using formal debate as a tool to strengthen civil skills and confidence in faith.

HOW DOES DEBATE INTEGRATE WITH DALLAS BAPTIST UNIVERSITY'S MISSION?

The Vision Statement for DBU charges us to build a great Christian university that is pleasing to God by producing Christ-centered servant leaders who are transforming the world. To best follow this directive, we as a team turn to Jesus for His example. When asked to share God’s greatest commandment, He replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important commandment. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commandments” (Matthew 22:37–40). This passage serves as a guide for how to best share God’s light with those around us, and everything that we do as a team has these two commandments at its core.

Through the activity of debating and our time spent together as a team, we will glorify God. Through these things, we will love others. Anything that contradicts either of these foundational pillars falls outside of our intended purpose.

Members of the Debate Team are taught both to love their neighbor and honor God through their conduct and words. This is at the heart of our training and takes the utmost priority. Through debate, team members develop empathy through considering the perspectives of others, resilience through the tournament experience, and advocacy through the act of debate, thus, nourishing the Fruit of the Spirit through team and tournament interactions. Not only does this activity serve DBU by aiding in recruitment, retention, and multi-disciplinary learning experiences, but it also extends to society (and the IPDA community) through practicing and modeling Christ-centered communication. Debate at DBU intends to foster a society that is informed, articulate, and empathetic, thus, encapsulating human excellence and inspiring speakers for Christ.

THE PATRIOT DEBATE TEAM FULLY EMBRACES OUR UNIVERSITY'S FIVE CORE VALUES:

DBU's five core values serve as the foundation for living out the mission and vision of a Christian university. As a team, we aim to be a Christ-centered body that fosters genuine community, marked both by service and transformative education, equipping ourselves and others to leave a global impact.

CHRIST-CENTERED

We believe all truth is God's truth and an informed mind can only be fully developed in light of the Gospel.

GENUINE COMMUNITY

We believe God designed us for community, so DBU fosters a unique community where we support and challenge one another academically, spiritually, and relationally.

MARKED BY SERVICE

We believe God calls us to serve Him and one another. Therefore, DBU strives to develop leaders with a heart for service.

TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

We believe a Christ-centered education should be transformative. Through the integration of faith and learning, DBU provides an education that transforms both the mind and spirit.

GLOBAL IMPACT

We believe God has called us to have a heart for the world, which is shown not only in our love for international students but also in our focus on serving and transforming the world, all for the glory of God.

How do these core values apply to the Patriot Debate Team?

We, as a team, exist to honor God and love our neighbor through exemplifying the aforementioned core values. Therefore, what we do is then based on fulfilling our purpose by pointing back to those values. When in doubt, all team members are to point back to our purpose. Does what we are doing help us fulfill that purpose? Is how we are doing it rooted in our values? If not, then we do not do it.

THE PATRIOT DEBATE TEAM IS "CHRIST-CENTERED"

Worship & Prayer

All team members are required to join together for devotionals on the Sunday mornings that we have tournaments. Members are strongly encouraged to invite other teams to participate in our devotional time. Furthermore, we will pray together during our team meetings and facilitate prayer requests so that team members can actively pray for one another. As we get to know our teammates, each member will find more opportunities to pray for and with one another.

Community

Part of loving our neighbor well is making certain to point them to Christ. As a team, we have the opportunity to do this in a variety of ways, however, one of the most prominent is by means of evangelism. Whether it takes place on or off of the debate circuit, effective evangelism usually requires a prior relationship, as this form of discussion can be quite intimate. Most people may be uncomfortable or unwilling to have such a personal conversation if they do not feel a sense of trust or if a sense of vulnerability has not been earned. This means investing in relationships with others who do not know Jesus. As friendships deepen, not only do all parties feel more comfortable having personal conversations, but the route to most effectively serve others becomes more clear.

As debaters, we train to tailor our arguments to a judge. As communicators, we train to communicate in ways that will best serve our audience. In both instances, we often have cause to side against our own preferences when it comes to communication style. Evangelism requires that same others-centric approach in order to build understanding. Conversations and conversion may take years to happen, years that may be long after our current social circle dissolves. With this in mind, it is our job to plant seeds and facilitate healthy conversations. Seek to understand why others believe the way that they do. Listen and care. We are planting seeds that we may not see the fruit of until eternity.

Clothing

Simply put, our clothing should not interfere with our team's purpose: pointing to God's holiness and loving our neighbors. Make a conscious effort to keep the parts of your body that need to be covered, covered, regardless of bodily position. For competitors at tournaments, business formal attire is required. Slacks, blazers, suits, dresses, skirts, etc. are generally considered appropriate. Jeans are considered inappropriate. Judges are expected to wear business casual and/or a DBU or Patriot Debate hoodie/quarterzip during tournaments. Following elimination from competition, all team members are expected to retain ready access to their business formal attire so that we can have a high-quality team picture at the conclusion of each tournament.

THE PATRIOT DEBATE TEAM FOSTERS “GENUINE COMMUNITY”

Debating with Integrity

This concept is very broad and includes numerous things. While some are listed here, this list is by no means exhaustive. When in doubt, team members are expected to ask themselves two questions:

- (1) “Does this course of action honor God or myself?”
- (2) “Does this course of action treat other humans as image bearers of God?”

Should the approach lend itself more towards honoring yourself than it does God or others, then it should not be pursued. Practically, this means winning with humility, losing with grace, refraining from ad hominem attacks, avoiding squirrely debate, disclosing when at all possible, communicating about people that are the focus of the debate round with gentleness and compassion, and being assertive instead of aggressive. All members are required to cite their sources and honor the authors’ intent.

Pronouns

To honor Truth and to love our neighbor well, we will avoid utilizing pronouns in debate rounds by using language such as “my opponent”, “the affirmative”, “the negative”, etc. Not only does this honor our convictions, but it also helps to de-personalize argumentation in-round, allowing the focus to rest on argumentation. In between rounds, members are free to utilize the same language or simply call people by his or her given name.

Compliments & Respect

Team members should seek opportunities to compliment their teammates’, opponents’, judges’, etc. character. There is something redeeming about everyone. Invest in the relationships enough to notice their character strengths. Instead of complaining about a person (including opponents and judges), compliment them, or say nothing at all.

Humility

As we interact both with each other and our competitors, team members will remain humble. We have much to learn. Furthermore, no one of us is an island. Each win is because of God’s blessings. Each win is because of the work we do together. No one of us will flourish in isolation. No one of us will struggle without support. Our team’s accomplishments are a product of God’s guiding hand, working through us, in us, and despite us. Additionally, we must have the humility to take responsibility when we are wrong and follow through to make it right. Humility should also inform how we celebrate our wins (restrained celebration in public, glee in private) and grieve our losses (taking the opportunity to celebrate others in public and looking for learning opportunities in private).

Effective/Empowering Feedback

The most effective feedback takes place after a person has had time to process their experience on their own and had the time for their adrenaline to reduce. Therefore, we do not provide oral feedback right after a debate round. Instead, we complete a ballot and forward it to Coach per usual. As we share feedback, members should highlight the debater's strengths and areas for future improvement. Both need to be specific and must be things that that person can control. As we describe the areas that require improvement, we should also provide the action steps to improve. Share the same amount of positive feedback as there is work for them to do. Unbalanced feedback becomes overwhelming and forfeits its usefulness. Thus, prioritize the most important areas where debaters are currently excelling and where they can excel at in the future.

Grace in Communication

Our team will spend a significant amount of time together and we are a rather large group. Understandably, it can become easy to wear emotionally thin and misinterpret what another person might mean. When a team member feels hurt by someone, we ask that they consider the full variety of things that could have been meant (or simply ask for clarification). Consider the outside influences that may have led either of you to communicate the way you did. Additionally, this helps team members build a thicker skin and increase their empathy.

Conflict & Conflict Resolution

In the event that a team member has a problem with another member of the team or its Coach, do not complain about the person. Instead, approach that person with a heart that seeks redemption and forgiveness. Lend grace, understanding, and reconciliation. As a team member disagrees with someone, instead of immediately giving input, that member will attempt to paraphrase what the other party said until the other person agrees that their position is understood. Should that one-on-one attempt fail, a Student Captain can be invited to the conversation with the other person as a mediator. If that attempt is also futile, a meeting with all parties and Coach can be appropriate. Do not allow for wounds to fester and relationships to break down. Invest in healing. Due to certain university policies and/or the severity of the conflict, Coach will sometimes be forced to defer to actions outside of this policy.

Alcohol & Drug Policy

All team members are held to the same [Code of Conduct](#) that is the default standard for each student at Dallas Baptist University. As per this standard, team members are prohibited from possessing, consuming, and/or being under the influence of alcoholic beverages and/or any illicit drugs while on University property or as a part of any University activity (i.e. tournaments or other DBU-sanctioned travel). Furthermore, all team members are required to be in compliance with all local, state, and federal laws regarding illicit drugs, including, but not limited to, their use, sale, possession, or manufacture. DBU takes this very seriously, and as such, any team members found in violation of these policies (whether at a debate-sanctioned activity or in any manner deemed inappropriate by the University) will be subject to immediate removal from the Patriot Debate Team, forfeiture of their associated scholarship, and it will be reported to Student Affairs and any other relevant University department(s).

When the standards of conduct regarding alcohol and/or illicit drugs are violated, the University may impose the following actions and/or sanctions in addition to removal from the team:

- (1) Automatic referral to the University Office of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention in the Counseling Center.
- (2) Automatic and immediate expulsion or termination from the University.
- (3) Other actions and/or sanctions may be imposed if deemed appropriate.

University-imposed sanctions are additional to any legal actions taken by local, state, or federal authorities.

Dating/PDA

As we spend time together, it is natural for some to become romantically interested in each other. Public displays of affection are not allowed (regardless of gender of parties involved and regardless of any current or intended future romantic relationship). This does not mean relationships must be secret, but that those involved should be considerate of those around them in the manners in which they express affection. Additionally, DBU would encourage team members to conduct themselves in a Biblical manner in their relationships, especially romantically and in the manner in which they behave within that relationship.

Title IX

All team members are held to the same [Title IX Policy](#) that is the default standard for each student at Dallas Baptist University. Because DBU wants to promote a safe living and learning environment, the Patriot Debate Team has a zero tolerance policy toward sexual assault, sexual violence, sexual harassment, sexual discrimination, domestic or dating violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, and other sexual misconduct.

In the case that a report is or needs to be filed, team members must follow the procedures found in DBU's official [Title IX Confidentiality & Reporting Procedures](#).

DBU takes this very seriously, and as such, any team members found in violation of these policies (whether at a debate-sanctioned activity or in any manner deemed inappropriate by the University) will be subject to immediate removal from the Patriot Debate Team, forfeiture of their associated scholarship, and it will be reported to Student Affairs and any other relevant University department(s). University-imposed sanctions are additional to any legal actions taken by local, state, or federal authorities.

Hotel Behavior

There should only be one gender represented in a hotel room at any time, without exception. If assistance of any kind is required in the room, a Student Captain of the appropriate gender should be sought out. This is for everyone's protection and comfort. If people of different genders would like to spend time together, they must do so within the confines of the hotel's common area(s), but may not leave the hotel building. Team members are strongly encouraged to be in their rooms by midnight to rest for the next day/the following week. It is required to respect other hotel guests by remaining quiet. Obeying any requests made by hotel staff is mandatory.

Honor Authority

Student Captains and the Coach have been chosen to lead. They are the standard setters and bearers. As such, they should be treated with respect. They want what is best for each individual team member and the team as a whole. With that said, Student Captains are under the authority of Coach. Coach is under the authority of the Senior Vice President. All of us are under God's authority. When in conflict, we should always defer to the highest authority available knowing that only God's authority is infallible. There may be times when Coach invites discussion about what we do as a team. However, when we are in a time crunch (usually at a tournament), or when student safety/security/health is impacted, decisions are not suggestions to be appealed in the moment. As Coach is responsible and liable in these circumstances, he will always be deferring to acting out of caution and the best interest for the team.

Debate is Reserved for In-Round

Debate is a formal activity that has a proper time and place. If a conversation is beginning to feel like a debate that is not honoring God or the individuals involved, then team members should listen more, ask questions to understand (not respond), collaborate, compliment, encourage, etc.

THE PATRIOT DEBATE TEAM IS "MARKED BY SERVICE"

Service to our Community

Mark 10:45 states, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Just as Christ is a model for service, we too, as a team, shall serve others. Additionally, we will look for opportunities to meet others' needs. As we see someone lonely, we will spend time with them. As we see trash that needs to be picked up at a tournament, we will pick it up. As we see someone needs a practice round to get qualified, we serve. As we see a need when prepping, we assist.

Service to our Peers

We have been and will be given opportunities to share our skills with the community through our local Stoa club (Invictus Fides), local schools, and a variety of other areas. By doing this, not only are we stewarding our gifts, but we are also building a community that values and supports what we do, further securing our future and supporting Dallas Baptist University.

THE PATRIOT DEBATE TEAM FOSTERS “TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION”

Meetings and Drills

Regular meeting attendance is an expectation for being on the team and for earning a scholarship. Each team member is allowed to miss one meeting each semester for any reason without putting your placement on the team/scholarship in jeopardy. Further absences will result in an immediate benching at the next tournament. Excused absences (those that would be excused for a class) do not count against the one, but they are reserved for emergencies and will be used sparingly. Excused absences must be communicated to Coach at least 48-hours prior to the club meeting being missed barring extenuating circumstances. During each meeting, team members are expected to participate with the best that they have in that moment. Meetings are designed for team members to both grow debate prowess and deepen relationships. Students will be asked to participate in some form of drill or a practice round at each meeting. This is an important part of the skill development process. As such, each member performing at their best capability during these practice rounds and drills is incredibly important.

Furthermore, to best foster an environment of attentiveness and learning, all team members are expected to completely refrain from phone usage during team meetings unless otherwise specified. Phones are easily transformed into distractions, and as such, are expected to be both out of sight and out of mind. Usage of laptops and/or other comparable devices is allowed strictly for the purpose of note-taking.

Communication

The Microsoft Teams chat and emails are the official means (outside of meetings) that Coach will address the entire team. As such, each member is required to keep the official Microsoft Teams chat unmuted and check your emails regularly. This helps with team efficiency and makes certain that everyone has access to information in a timely manner. Unofficial Microsoft Teams chats may be muted. However, as they still have significant impact on the debate team’s culture, each member will still be held accountable for the communication that takes place in those messages. We will love our neighbors well in every opportunity.

Tournaments

Each member is expected to qualify for tournaments by attending meetings, completing the prescribed amount and type of practice rounds, and judging rounds. Members are expected to be available for no less than six preliminary tournaments throughout the year. In addition to these six, all members must attend the IPDA National Championship Tournament. Members are expected to qualify for all seven tournaments. This is a debate team, so each student is expected to attend tournaments. Sometimes members will judge. Sometimes members will debate. Both are important ways to contribute to the team.

Academics

Team members are students before they are a members of the debate team. Academic excellence is more important than being on the team and has the potential to make each student a more effective member of the team. Members are expected to maintain a minimum overall GPA of 2.00. Should a member's overall GPA dip below 2.00, that member will be required to sit out of travel with the team for a semester. However, that student will still need to qualify for the same number of tournaments and continue to attend team meetings. If at the completion of that semester, the student still lacks an overall 2.00 GPA, then they will be removed from the team and their scholarship will be forfeited.

Practice Rounds

To qualify for debate tournaments, members are required to complete at least one practice round each week (unless otherwise specified by Coach). This prepares members for tournaments and ensures that they develop into better debaters. Unless completed during meetings, team members are responsible for scheduling these debate rounds amongst themselves and reporting their completion to Coach. These rounds will be debated on topics that are assigned each week in club and are to be judged either by another team member or a lay judge. Furthermore, these rounds will be flowed on paper, and upon completion, debaters are responsible for taking a picture the flow with both debaters and the judge present. The judge will fill out a virtual PDF ballot. For credit, the photo and digital ballot must be submitted to Coach via email each week. Members should view these practice rounds as a bare minimum to becoming competent/maintaining skills. Students are more than welcome to complete more debate rounds to grow their skills. There are a variety of ways to utilize practice rounds effectively. Failure to complete weekly rounds will result in being benched at the next tournament.

Timeliness

Timeliness is an essential aspect of debate. Each member is given a set amount of time to prep, speak, and ask questions. We are expected to know those times and to adhere to those rules. Furthermore, debaters must be where they are expected to be at the time that they are expected to be there (or earlier). When a member of our team is late, they are not just affecting themselves, but everyone around them.

Students are expected to arrive on time for club to start at 7:00 p.m., sharp. Lateness and/or skips will be tracked and may result in consequences, including but not limited to, being benched at a tournament.

THE PATRIOT DEBATE TEAM WILL LEAVE A "GLOBAL IMPACT"

Representing DBU

Dallas Baptist University takes a great risk allowing this team to go into rounds on behalf of our University. Every argument we make, each word we say, and each action we take, represents both our faith and our school. Many of our fellow competitors are not routinely exposed to Christians or our school, thus, we serve as that representation.

In light of this, follow everything in DBU's Student Handbook. This seems intuitive, but as DBU students, each member is expected to follow every part of the Student Handbook. As we involve ourselves in community (debate and otherwise), we are expected to be ambassadors for Dallas Baptist University. As such, we should exemplify DBU's expectations as outlined in the Student Handbook both while we are both on and off campus. Not only is this submitting to authority as Scripture repeatedly commands us to do, but this enables DBU and its stakeholders to continue to trust and support us, both financially and otherwise. This enables us to continue.

In-Class Behavior

Each students' classmates and professors will know that our students are members of the debate team. Thus, each team member is an ambassador for the debate team in their classes. Each member should speak with humility and openness to learn in their classes. Each member must also must attend class and complete assignments in a timely manner.

Everything listed above contributes to our long-term health and survival as a team. Thus, to be a Christ-centered body that fosters genuine community, we must be marked both by service and transformative education, equipping ourselves and others to leave a global impact.

ACCOUNTABILITY

By agreeing to be on this team (and accepting a scholarship), each member is agreeing to adhere to this handbook. You are expected to live up to not only the letter of the law, but the spirit of the law. The consequence of the infraction will be proportionate to the severity of the infraction (at the discretion of Coach). Potential consequences are: a conversation with the person harmed, a conversation with a Student Captain, being benched for a tournament, and/or no longer being a part of the team (forfeiting your scholarship). To avoid these consequences, go back to our purpose and core values. These should guide your behavior and help you to hold yourself and others accountable. As disciplinary action is taken, it is private between Coach and that team member. This may appear as if no action is taken, but it is simply to protect everyone's privacy and to facilitate reconciliation.

