The 2012 Urban Debate National Championship and Annual Dinner

A Report to Friends and Funders of
The National Association for Urban Debate Leagues

April 12-15, 2012
On April 14 and 15, 2012, seventy-six of the top-ranked urban high school debaters from nineteen cities across the country gathered in Washington, DC for the fifth annual Urban Debate National Championship tournament. Selected from among more than 7,000 urban debaters nationwide, these debaters earned the right to compete in Washington, DC by winning local qualifying tournaments. For two days they debated whether the United States should significantly increase its exploration and/or development of space beyond the Earth’s mesosphere. The NAUDL is pleased to share the results of the 2012 Urban Debate National Championship and to recognize these talented and committed young people and the many individuals and organizations who helped make this Championship possible.

**HIGHLIGHTS OF URBAN DEBATE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP RESULTS**

Holden Choi and Benjamin Dean from Henry W. Grady High School in Atlanta, Georgia won the 2012 Championship on a 3-0 decision. Their coach is Ms. Lisa Willoughby. This year, Choi and Dean also won the Johns Creek Tournament, were finalists at the Wake Forest Tournament, and won the Steve Stein Award for best overall policy debate tournament record in North Fulton County. Holden Choi will attend Georgetown University, where he has received the Carroll Scholarship, a merit-based scholarship. Benjamin Dean will attend Emory University, where he has been awarded the Benjamin E. Mays Scholarship and a National Merit Scholarship.

Second place honors went to Dikshant Malla and David Neustadt from Baltimore City College High School in Baltimore, MD. Their coach is Patrick Daniels. The young men have debated together for two years and this year earned bids to the Tournament of Champions, the Ohio Valley Invitational, and were champions of the Georgetown Capitol Classic. David Neustadt will attend Harvard University. Dikshant Malla is a junior in high school.

Owen Jones of Lane Technical College Prep High School in Chicago won the Boies, Schiller & Flexner Top Speaker Award. His coach is Ms. Valerie Mason. He also won first place speaker at the 2012 Mayer Brown Nationals Qualifier and took second place at the Chicago Debate Championships. He will attend Depaul University where he plans to study marketing.

The NAUDL gratefully acknowledges Jonathan Paul and the staff and volunteers of Georgetown University for their generous support of the 2012 Urban Debate National Championship tournament.
On Thursday evening, April 12, the NAUDL hosted a celebration of urban debate with its Annual Dinner, its largest fundraising event of the year. The Dinner brought together nearly four hundred urban debate supporters, local league directors, coaches, and the competing students to recognize the achievements of thousands of urban debaters nationwide.

NAUDL Board Director Leonard Gail presented the first NAUDL Outstanding Leader Award to Charles F. Bolden, Jr., NASA Administrator, retired Marine Corps General, former astronaut and space shuttle commander. In his acceptance speech, Bolden challenged the students in the audience: “Do your job and do it very well! ...Always remind yourself of ‘why’ you are pursuing the things that you do and stay in touch with that answer and don't let others define it for you.”

Keynote speaker U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered his own enthusiastic support for the benefits of debate in urban schools. “Competitive debate is one of the great equalizers of educational opportunity.” Citing research studies of urban debate leagues, he said, “To be very clear, the experience of competing on an urban debate team boosts your college readiness and your chance to succeed in life.”

The program also featured 2011 Urban Debate National Champions Amna Tariq and Shagun Kukreja, both of whom now attend Rutgers University. They spoke about how debate contributed to their academic success and put them on a path to college. The NAUDL presented the Outstanding League Award to the Dallas Urban Debate Alliance. In the last two years, the Dallas UDA has more than tripled the number of students participating in debate. Board Chair Craig Budner and Executive Director Nicole Serrano accepted the award.

Special thanks to the 2012 NAUDL Annual Dinner Committee

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On Friday, April 13, our Urban Debate National Championship competitors, their coaches, and an audience of urban debate supporters gathered at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum to watch debate teams from Dallas and Baltimore debate the question: Resolved: that expanding the space program is vital to America's economic future.

Stephanie Jimenez and Lauren Loper of Skyline High School in Dallas argued the Affirmative, while Darian Murray and Corwin Jones of Baltimore City College High School argued the Negative. The debate was judged by an esteemed panel of fourteen judges from the public and private sectors with wide-ranging expertise in space, aerodefense, national security, education, public policy, law and history. After a spirited debate, with most judges scoring the debate very closely on their ballots, the Affirmative team of Jimenez and Loper won in a 10-5 decision.

Following the debate, students participated in a career panel and Q&A session with Smithsonian scientists, curators, and administrators and then enjoyed a special guided tour of the National Air and Space Museum.

**Special Thanks to the Judges of the 2012 NAUDL Public Debate**

Geneviève DuBose, Teaching Fellow, U.S. Department of Education
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Dr. Margaret Weitekamp, National Air and Space Museum

We also gratefully acknowledge the staff of the National Air and Space Museum, the Chicago Debate Commission and David Song, Assistant Director of Programming for their invaluable assistance with the debate.
As the national leader of the urban debate movement, the NAUDL works with its partner leagues to provide debate programming to urban middle and high school students. The NAUDL’s vision is that all urban youth graduate from high school prepared to succeed in college and their careers, and to contribute to their communities. The NAUDL’s goal is, in the next five years, to triple the number of urban debaters.

Debate is an academic sport that builds reading, research, communication and critical thinking skills. Each year high school debaters throughout the country debate a single complex policy question, or resolution, for an entire year. Coached by teachers, debaters conduct extensive research on the resolution and develop arguments for and against it. Debaters hone their arguments in afterschool practices and compete at weekend tournaments.

Competitive debate has always been available to students at suburban schools, but twenty years ago it disappeared from more cash-strapped urban public schools. Urban debate programs level the playing field, giving urban students access to the same type of academically rigorous debate programs available to their suburban peers. Today, urban debate is flourishing in nineteen cities around the country. Research studies clearly demonstrate:

• Urban debate improves secondary literacy, academic performance, and high school graduation rates.
• Debate prepares urban students for college by helping them achieve ACT college-readiness benchmarks in reading, English, math and science.
• Debate prepares urban youth for twenty-first century careers by helping them master important skills: critical thinking and problem solving; communication; collaboration; and creativity and innovation.
• Debate prepares urban students for community engagement by instilling a life-long interest in speaking out on issues that affect their communities.
Urban Debate National Championship Results

National Champions
Henry W. Grady High School, Atlanta (Holden Choi and Benjamin Dean)

Finalists
Baltimore City College High School, Baltimore (Dikshant Malla and David Neustadt)

Semi-finalists
St. Paul Central High School, St. Paul (Imanol Avendano and Hannah Nesser)
Whitney M. Young Magnet High School, Chicago (Sydney Doe and Hanna Nasser)

Quarter-finalists
Bronx School for Law, Government, and Justice, New York (Charles Athanasopolous and Lenny Herrera)
Brooklyn Technical High School, New York (Lyra Decastro and Purti Pareek)
Lane Technical College Prep High School, Chicago (Owen Jones and Joey Peculis)
Science Park High School, Newark (Luis Carrera and Paul Viegas)

Octo-finalists
California College Preparatory, Oakland (Jason Auro and William Hampton-Bruce)
Fremont Media-Academy, Oakland (Kim Mejia-Cuellar and Jack Mejia-Cuellar)
JBS Law Magnet High School, Dallas (Ivan Garcia and Rolando Velasquez)
W. T. White High School, Dallas (Joseph Reyes and Luke Strother)
Lincoln College Preparatory Academy, Kansas City (Corey Fisher and Jared Freemon)
North Houston Early College High School, Houston (Daniel Moreno and Robert Torres)
Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, Baltimore (Korey Johnson and Evan Smith)
American History High School, Newark (Jazir Beckford and Quamir Johnson)

Top Speakers
1. Owen Jones (Lane Tech College Prep High School, Chicago)
2. Purti Pareek (Brooklyn Technical High School, New York)
3. David Neustadt (Baltimore City College High School, Baltimore)
4. Holden Choi (Henry W. Grady High School, Atlanta)
5. Hanna Nasser (Whitney M. Young Magnet High School, Chicago)
6. Benjamin Dean (Henry W. Grady High School, Atlanta)
7. Jeremy Chavez (Downtown Magnets High School, Los Angeles)
8. Kwaishon Bell (Loyola High School, Detroit)
9. Jazir Beckford (American History High School, Newark)
10. Tojuan Reed (Ridgeway High School, Memphis)
11. Nicolas Cathcart (Brighton High School, Boston)
12. Luke Strother (W.T. White High School, Dallas)
13. Daniel Moreno (North Houston Early College High School, Houston)
14. Korey Johnson (Baltimore Polytech Institute, Baltimore)
15. Paul Viegas (Science Park High School, Newark)
16. Hannah Nesser (St. Paul Central High School, St. Paul)
17. Joseph Reyes (W.T. White High School, Dallas)
18. Lyra Decastro (Brooklyn Technical High School, New York)
19. Imanol Avendano (St. Paul Central High School, St. Paul)
20. Sydney Doe (Whitney M. Young Magnet High School, Chicago)
The NAUDL wishes to thank the following sponsors and contributors for their support of the 2012 Annual Dinner and Urban Debate National Championship.

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