

April 10, 2022 Meeting of Members Minutes

Platform: Zoom

Chair: Brier Buchalter

Minutes taker: Artem Raskin

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Introduction

Brier Buchalter

For the meeting today again, we're not going to be as strict on the time limits. It's going to be about one minute per person. We're going to go down in order of all our agenda items. If anybody would like to ask to table an item or to move forward, they may.

A lot of these items are either issues that have come up repeatedly that we're trying to get clarity on, or there's something that somebody emailed or requested we add to the agenda. You'll notice that several of the items you have requested have been added to there.

If anybody has any questions or comments please do just click the hand raise feature to speak.

We will try and prioritize people that haven't spoken already before going back to somebody who has already spoken.

So, first off, I'll just read a quick opening. We look forward to having an open discussion on meaningful issues to our community. We'll be keeping track by hand raising and trying to give first time speakers the opportunity to be heard first. Whenever possible, please feel free to listen and address our speakers' comments. We hope to have a kind, inclusive and effective dialogue. Please join us in fostering the environment and community where young people can thrive and find their voices in a welcoming and inclusive space.

Call for Volunteers

Brier Buchalter

So we're going to start this meeting now, officially. The first thing I want to highlight is an issue. - this is on behalf of the entire Board - that we've been having very consistently and we love the community's help. So a lot of times the majority of the Board's work in making NPDL function is usually very tedious, long-term projects that might not be very fun or exciting.

And then we often get together and talk about legislation or tournaments which are so much more enjoyable. But a lot of times we need volunteers and we haven't been getting them throughout the course of this year, whether it be regional correspondents to do the updates of the points sheets which I know you all care about very much, or volunteers to assist with curriculum development and certain tasks. When we've been sending out emails we haven't been receiving those. So I'd like to make - really, from the bottom of my heart - requests, if anybody is feeling a little disconnected or they'd like to be involved in NPDL - this is the best way to find out really what goes on behind the scenes, to be able to get your voice heard in a real systemic way and to help give back to the community that hosts the TOC.

So we'd really love to get more volunteers.

If you are interested, please email us and let us know or respond to the emails we send out or in any other way that you'd like to be connected.

May I ask the community, just as a first opening - is there anything we can do or that you think would be helpful in trying to elicit more responses for volunteers? Are there any suggestions from our membership on what we could do as a community to keep more people involved in different parts of running NPDL?

Coach Retention and Development

Brier Buchalter

So the first one is a major issue that a lot of regions have been struggling with this year, especially with COVID and other exacerbating factors.

Coach retention and development and the main question here is how can we best encourage coaches to continue in the league and what are some ways as a community we can help coaches develop.

This is one of the most systemic complaints people have submitted in terms of finding reliable coaching, high turnover rates, and how to get access.

So I'm really curious if anybody has thoughts on what we could do or needs that communities have when it comes to coaching, I know I've heard great suggestions from Oregon.

The East Coast in California.

I'd really like to hear how everybody handles it and if you have any thoughts?

I'll break the ice and double ask.

Is there anybody who's maybe a veteran coach or a newer coach that can mention some of the issues they've faced in terms of coaching in ways that we could support one another or do something to develop?

Zach Moss

The biggest problem for me as an experienced coach in terms of being retained by this community, to put it very simply, is money. As I age, I find that it costs more money to keep myself alive. And high school extracurricular coaching responsibilities - the payment for that does not rise at the same speed that the cost of living does, to say nothing about enticing people to do it, so ultimately the problem with retaining coaches will always be trying to find the people who do this as a labor of love and not completely burning them out in the process and forcing them to find a new job because the work to currency ratio is out of whack. So as someone who's been doing this since 2006, that's my take.

Julie Herman

I think I want to echo what was just said in that being compensated is extraordinarily important, I think, not just for people who are heads of programs, but also when fostering assistant coach relationships.

And I think one of the concrete things that NPDL specifically can do to support this is not ask people to do labor for free. Every time I go in and talk to people about the finances, it's pretty clear that TOC makes money and that NPDL could make money. And so I don't think it is reasonable for NPDL to ask adults who are already generally overworked and overused compared to what they're being compensated for to then do additional free labor on behalf of a league that does and can make money.

Sam Timinsky

I want to foot stomp what Julie just said. I will also say as someone who has been doing some outreach and working with some student on programs we have been doing some co-practices. We're doing two to four of these a season, and that's already pretty taxing even a relatively well-resourced program like us, with our assistants, et cetera I mean. It's just really not going to be tenable without some sort of financial backing. There are gotta be grants we can get to provide...

Maybe NPDL could have some sort of granting system to give a school, 3 grand, whatever amount of money, to subsidize a coach and hire a college student at least to give teams support. I would also say, though, that it would seem to me that some sectors of the league are very proudly student-run. So we're going to have to tread softly if that's how they want to proceed, and make sure we're not running roughshod over what the schools' preferences are. I am in favor of adults being in the room. I think that provides legal and logistical support. It provides perspective for kids. It's weird when competitors only have the perspective of the three or four years they're involved. But if they don't want it, we shouldn't be forcing it on them either.

I have no idea how exactly to go about that fund raising, etc. But I can guarantee you that if you provide me with a structure I can probably go and do some fundraising and I would probably be somewhat successful.

Katie Wilson

I also think the other thing that is really tricky is that coaching systems are different everywhere. If you're a coach in Oregon it's very bureaucratic. Everyone gets paid exactly the same and it's almost nothing. And it's a formal hiring process. And you're allocated assistant coaches based on your school district. And unless you have volunteers, there's no getting around it. I don't know what coaching hiring systems are like anywhere else.

The other thing I was going to say is I know that my local urban debate league, they pay... Students participate in those tournaments completely free. The urban debate league pays coaches, pays judges, does workshops and camps for students, and they don't collect participation fees. So I feel like a call to make is to other urban debate leagues and asking them, how they are raising all this money and paying for all of this coaching and judging and seeing if you can use that as a model to subsidize coaching and judging for teams that might need it.

Rodda John

I have two brief thoughts.

I love the UDL suggestion, but I think as was just put in chat they have a massive fundraising effort, where they're like getting a lot of the grants that Sam talked about.

But they also just have a national board with people who spend their whole life fundraising. So I'm not really sure whether the organization is there.

What I was thinking though is, I don't think we need to limit ourselves to thinking about coaching on a per school basis, because I think it would be a lot more cost effective for the league to subsidize a weekly practice or something where we pay a coach and then we just have students show up and they can do something like that and then the coach. You can get more bang for your buck per se, right? Because more people can show up to the practice that's run by one coach. I don't think we then need to strictly stick to school boundaries. That's if the goal is just to get debate education to people.

I think the question of getting funding for schools is one that's probably pretty poorly dealt with by a national organization just because of differences that exist between how different schools do funding or how different schools can come up with coaches. I think Katie started to elucidate that with the Oregon example.

[
in chat:

lila lavender

We need to change the constraints rules if we do this, which was a lot of what individuals brought up when this new constraints rule was passed, as otherwise all of those coaches and weekly practices would be constrained against every single debaters they coach.

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Riyana Srihari

I think that in theory the idea of collaboration between schools and specifically with coaches is really great.

But with their current conflict system, I feel like there's a lot of perverse incentives around not wanting to conflict ourselves against other coaches specifically, like our conflicts are such that if you even consider judging or like helping out with a practice run for another team, there is a conflict under NPDL laws. I think that there needs to be some discussion on reforming conflict rules and changing the new rules that we added recently in a recent meeting.

If we want to be fostering some kind of connection because fundamentally, this is an educational activity, and I think conflict rules are good for preventing issues in competitive advantages.

But what this should really come down to is what is most educational and I think reducing the conflict rules and making it a lot easier and incentivizing kids to want to reach out to other coaches is probably the right move, and definitely something I'd love to see on the written ballots this year.

Brier Buchalter

I'm just going to give people a little bit of context, and Artem has been on the Board much longer, since the beginning, so he can correct me if I'm wrong, but do we usually lose or make money on the TOC, in aggregate, Artem?

Artem Raskin

We will be releasing the full TOC budget summary to our membership. I know Karen is working on that so that people can see the details. But the short version of it is that we usually make money on the TOC - however, not a lot. I think the last TOC that we have the budget for we made, like, 300 bucks, or something along those lines.

Brier Buchalter

Yeah, so put that into contrast just just for a short reality on that. If we make approximately \$300, I know some years, when I talked about the budget we were nearly at a loss.

That's assuming fees. So if nobody ends up with judging fees or anything like that in our base shows up.

If we're only making 300, just do the simple math. There's 50 teams, so if we want to raise \$20,000, we would be raising it... the entry fees would go up into the hundreds to thousands of dollars per team, which of course I think would be extremely exclusive.

So if we do want to go into fundraising, I work, actually, quite a bit with somebody else in different organizations.

That would be orders of magnitude above what the current board is.

We would need people... just to get started there, the UDL hires people each region for like \$100,000 to \$200,000 to be the local directors of those nonprofits in some areas. So when we're dealing with an annual budget that's in a few thousand dollars, this would be an order of magnitude jump.

Very pragmatically, I want to ground it right that we might not be prepared for.

However, I really like the idea that kind of is coming out about having a weekly session or a monthly session.

There are some coaches that might be later on their careers where they can donate there.

Time or people in positions where they could do that, and there might be somewhere where they need income and they could be hired.

You know where?

It's not exceedingly expensive, so that might be a really good idea.

I love that idea of getting the NPDL together and having some open coaching and scrimms.

[
in chat:

Riyana Srihari

Nueva is happy to spearhead the formation of a fundraising committee functioning under the board—our goal should absolutely be to expand and develop our board's capabilities, we should be making that order of magnitude jump if it means we can subsidize teams and increase access to education.

]

Artem Raskin

I would like to clarify what I said earlier, which is we generally do make a little bit of money on the TOC. However, we lose money on everything else we do, such as hosting the website, the forum, and running NPDL Fall, so I think throughout the season we actually end up losing a little bit of money.

The second thing that I will say to address the points that were made about judge constraint rules. I think there is a lot of nuance there, and if somebody wants to put together a legislative committee and work out the exact details of how to make sure that we judge our rounds ethically, while at the same time not discouraging the educational benefit of school collaboration - I think that would be best discussed in a small group that can hammer out those little details and we do have a process for that. And then once that committee puts together those details, the membership can vote on it online through a Google form.

Online Tournaments

Brier Buchalter

What should the role of online tournaments be in the future?

The ongoing pandemic led to an unprecedented shift to online tournaments. In-person tournaments continue to come back.

There are many experiences online tournaments cannot recreate that in person tournaments can. There's also unique benefits to online tournaments, including minimizing costs and minimizing environmental impact, and fostering cross-national competition.

What role should the online tournaments be going forward?

Michael Murray

I think that there needs to be a continuation of online tournaments. One of the things I've just been in a discussion with about online tournaments is about how it allows for people with certain disabilities to compete a lot more easily online than they can in person.

On top of that, it allows for them to not have to disclose their disabilities when they compete online and have a proper setup.

So I think in some way shape or form we need to continue this online setting because it does allow for more accessibility and more participation.

[
in chat:

Adult Rep - Moss - Bishop O'Dowd to Everyone (12:46 PM)

cosign on Michael's points

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Sierra Maciorowski-Hribar

I was going to say, I think that there's kind of an interesting balance on online tournaments, and I have a lot of opinions, but I'll kind of condense it to.

I think that, maybe tournaments like NPDL Fall might be useful to continue to have online in the interest of allowing people to like, you know, kind of have that low cost access and be able to compete from all sorts of different areas.

I do think, though, that I notice that I think my kids are tired a lot of times from online tournaments, so I think that it's probably - hopefully when conditions permit, I think it will be nice to maybe have more local tournaments that are in person and perhaps some of the larger national tournaments that are online so we can kind of get that good balance.

Kate Clarke-Anderson

I do believe that having the online tournaments has been what made it up our ability to come to this in California. I think if the tournament was not online, we would not be able to afford to come to the tournament, and since we can meet people from the West Coast and join in from the East Coast, this tournament online and the one in the fall online makes that all possible.

And also just to piggyback on agenda point number one, I do believe that it would be really great for the East Coast for some schools that are just getting started with parliamentary debate to have

the benefit of different coaches throughout, you know the West Coast and being able to join in a discussion on that during one of the nights for a meeting.

I think that would be awesome.

Sarah Wheeler

I agree with most everyone who's already spoken on the benefits of online debate.

But I also want to echo Sierra's sentiment. My students are tired. They miss the social interaction of in person tournaments?

So if it's possible we should do hybrid tournaments, the college policy circuit has been doing that this entire year.

The NDT was hybrid. I think it gives the elements of being able to debate online if that is the most optimal for squads and teams, while also acknowledging that part of what makes debate so great is seeing each other in person.

[
in chat:

Adult Rep - Sierra Maciorowski - Mountain View to Everyone (12:50 PM)

Hybrid sounds like a great idea!! Universal accessibility and also the chance for socializing etc

]

Brier Buchalter

I'm just going to quickly interject for context. I don't think there's any thought that we would get rid of... There definitely will be in person next year, barring another major turn in the pandemic. I think it's a matter of do we want to try and continue and support online as well or I really appreciate that last comment calling for maybe more hybrid tournaments, so don't.

As long as things go normal, there's already that transition back in person. The question is, do we keep elements from the online as well?

Tamanna Gandhi

I personally like online tournaments. I know that I've been able to attend a lot more tournaments because it's more accessible, and there's like no transportation costs or anything like that with online tournaments. I think we can have in person local tournaments next year, but for the bigger national tournaments, just have more people to come in unless like some other people touched upon, we should still continue online tournaments.

David Yastremski

I'm just going to echo the hybrid. After watching how NDT ran last week.

I think that should be something we definitely move forward in taking a look at.

As an East Coast coach, and with students who like the ability to adapt their debate styles to the different regions that we currently offer, the hybrid version or the online version would allow a little bit of that accessibility.

Again, as Kate mentioned, another East Coast coach, to be basically, you know cross country in a much more efficient manner.

However that being said, those in-person experiences I think are truly valuable and I would definitely want to see that continue as well.

Brier Buchalter

I just to give a little background, like a little insight to the board and what we've been talking about.

I think there's been a long term desire to keep NPDL Fall online, also so we can have the league meeting online.

I don't know if it's officially codified, honestly, I don't remember, I think the entire current Board was like this just makes sense, for a couple of reasons, for NPDL Fall. I think this is also saying do we want to continue certifying and allowing online tournaments? Do we want to look at these hybrid models? That's more of the question because it's a new unprecedented territory.

Artem Raskin

I think Brier is correct. There is a consensus that NPDL Fall is going to continue being online. Online tournaments will exist in some form in the future.

I think the real question is whether we should be encouraging at least some of the more local tournaments to invest in an in-person format, because from a tournament director's perspective, online is easier to do, just from a logistical standpoint. And so unless there is encouragement of doing it in person, they will continue staying online.

We talked about coach retention and growth in the previous point, and I will just say that debate coaching, unlike most other professions, is one that doesn't really have a lot of formal training.

The way that I learned to coach when I was a younger coach was that I went to in-person tournaments and then some of the more experienced coaches just sat me down, and they were, like, Artem, what are you doing? Do this other thing. And I was, like, thank you, that makes a lot of sense. The opportunity to sit down with people at tournaments in informal settings is how I, at least, learned 90% of my coaching skills.

And I think while online tournaments replicate a lot of the formal aspects of tournaments - you get to go to rounds, and you get to listen to judge instructions - they lack the element of people informally interacting between rounds, which is how we build community and which is how we help younger coaches develop.

Rose Weathers

And when people are talking about the difference between local and bigger tournaments, what are some examples of what that means? Just so I can get more of an idea of what people are talking about.

Brier Buchalter

I think in our area, for example, if there's a major university in an area and they host what's called an "invitational," it's probably being attended by people from multiple states all over the place.

Whereas a local tournament might be like a local league event or maybe a local high school. Historically they tend to be smaller and be local versus, say, Yale, Stanford, Berkeley, or a long-established high school invitational, like Stephen Stewart would be an example of one. People come from around the nation. So it's kind of an example of, is it more local people in those regions? Or do people fly in?

Sierra Maciorowski

Yeah, sorry I have more thoughts on this 'cause this is something I've been thinking a lot about. but I also will kind of add on to what Artem was saying about the benefits of local tournaments for coaches that I think we see a kind of similar benefit in terms of in-person benefits for kids too, because I think that like a lot of what kind of gets students into debate and wanting to improve is being able to spectate more experienced debaters so I think that can be really helped. We kind of get that in online, but it feels like a lot of times it's difficult to spectate in the same way and have the energy.

The second thing I would say is kind of like the contrast to that, which is that I think just in terms of like online tournaments and hybrid options, I think I'm really in favor of even local tournaments having you know some access to hybrid or like online models. Because I think that under principles of Universal design which are intended to ensure accessibility for anyone with any forms of disability, I think that it's really important to make sure that there's an option, particularly in terms of COVID. What people think about the epidemiology may differ, but I do think that a lot of disabled people, my friends and I, are going to be really careful about in-person events, so having the option to participate online is probably really helpful for a lot of people.

Brier Buchalter

As the person who kind of I was actually the one who initiated this topic.

I had more thought about - do we want to continue online at all, was the main question I was having. It's very interesting that a lot of people here - I'm just gonna be - a little insight into my mind - a lot of people here are like, oh no, encouraging in-person.

I do know that even in some of the most "online-friendly" regions, like, you know, some areas, you may not know this, but, like, they're fully back in person, they're basically, like, banning online, all, most, I think there's a movement everywhere, at least in my region, I know, a lot of

other regions, to move in person, so for any of you having that concern, I'm very confident that's going to be... Again, we're dealing with a pandemic, where two years ago, if I'm, like, we're gonna be having our tournament on Zoom, everybody would be like, what's Zoom and you know why?

Yeah, but I do, I do just want to give you... for some of you... My students have been feeling the physical, mental health, emotional lack, the changes of being online and the in-person stuff should be coming back.

But it's more a question of, do we continue online... So it does sound like there's a little bit of an interest in both.

[
in chat:

Adult Rep - Julie Herman - duplicate account to Everyone (12:55 PM)

I guess I am pretty uninterested in NPDL forcing events to be in person via selective certification or refusal to certify online tournaments, as much as I think in-person events are awesome and should be promoted locally.

Student Rep - Rosie Bultman to Everyone (12:57 PM)

I joined late but have we talked about electronic flowing at in person tournaments?

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Rodda John

I wanted to bring attention to Julie's comment in chat because I Think it's spot on.

I think that the market solves here. And I hate making market-based arguments, but I think that it works, in that insofar as there is a demand for online tournaments which I think this discussion represents a demand existing for those sorts of tournaments they'll exist.

And I think this discussion also represents a demand for in person tournaments, and I think there are likely going to be large invitationals that are run in person and there are likely to be large invitationals that are run online, and there's likely to be an enterprising tab director who will attack hybrid tournaments and run a hybrid tournament, and we'll all be very happy to go. But I think the NPDL should really just stay out of it, and should just be like, hey look, there's a tournament, a bunch of parli teams attended, we're going to give points, and not make any distinctions between this sort of debate that's done at those.

And I think the second implication here is, I think different regions have differences that make them more or less amenable to in person or online.

I think, Brier, you flagged this when you just said like look, some regions have gone back to 100% in person already. New York certainly hasn't. I'm sure other places haven't.

But there's also geographic concerns. In New York City, it's really easy to host an in-person tournament because it takes us 30 minutes to get everywhere by subway within Manhattan,

whereas that's certainly not true in other places in the country where maybe online or hybrid tournaments work more effectively.

So, if the question is, should the NPDL Fall be online, I think we all say yes. But if the question is, should the NPDL get interested in certification decisions tournament by tournament - I think the answer is no, and we just let each tournament director fill in the gap where they think there is a gap. And the market resolves.

Brier Buchalter

I really think the Board is like, yeah, NPDL Fall is probably perma-online. The meeting can be there. Everybody can come. It doesn't favor a region. That's been a consensus within the Board, I think, I don't think anybody disagreed with that.

Now I have a more pressing question which is for next year's TOC.

You know all the reasons why the NPDL Fall online like you all said, there's accessibility, there's cost, it allows for more diversity.

But I think there's a lot of us that acknowledge there's a real benefit to being in person. Are there thoughts about next year, TOC, 'cause I know in a while we'll be planning that 'cause it takes a lot of time. Thoughts on next year's TOC Online, hybrid, in-person etc.

[
in chat:

Adult Rep - Rodda John - Stuy - he/him to Everyone (1:00 PM)

Just make the TOC hybrid.....

Adult Rep - Sierra Maciorowski - Mountain View to Everyone (1:00 PM)

Hybrid?

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Rose Weathers

For the TOC, I would be in favor of online or hybrid, but something to consider if the decision is hybrid is, how could we make that a fair format, 'cause it feels like the people who would be attending in person would be more favored by the judges and would also have an overall better experience because they'd be able to interact with people.

And so, just expanding that access to people who are online.

Maybe having a forum between rounds or like at night or like in the morning before the rounds and like having like a big Zoom screen there too.

So like other people can attend and like talk to people or like people could join Zoom and go to breakout rooms with kids from other schools like I don't know how that would work but just like making it so that the hybrid format kind of like offers the same like in person benefits to the online kids too, because some people just physically could not travel all the way to California.

Brier Buchalter

Yeah, and that's been a big issue some of you have probably faced, which is like how do we rotate the tournaments?

Do we go between New York, California, Oregon and and just keep rotating California, right? Is a state where SoCal and California are further away than most East Coast states, right?

So you know, for those SoCal people it means a day-long car ride or a plane trip as well, so it's a tricky thing we do have to deal with to address the geographic diversity.

One thing I'm just going to throw in here is I'm always torn, because there's huge environmental benefits to doing things online versus everybody having to fly, you know, stay in hotel, there's a lot of other resources that go up in that. So there's a lot of levels where there's benefits, so I do like it seems like there's interest in hybrid. And again, I'm going to give it preemptive... if the board sends out that call, please do respond if you can so we can plan together on what would be the best way to do hybrid.

Honor Society**Brier Buchalter**

I'm curious, curious if there's interest, so in Honor Society for the MLE, especially for use in college and university applications.

Parliamentary debate is facilitated on a national scale through NPD. Other formats have organizations which have honor societies that you can participate in and join through community service and academic example endeavors, you'll see a little link I give here for nsda which does not have parli as a national event, so you can't go the national championships in parli.

We wish to find out if the community would like to pursue the development of an Honor Society we could use on transcripts. If so, we will find out thoughts about how to best organize that from the community.

So this is a project I talked about last year. I started doing work on it, but again, volunteers and stuff a little tricky.

I'm curious if people are interested in having an Honor Society that you can mark on your transcripts and this would be unrelated.

My initial conception and I'm just giving you my initial thoughts, please let me know if it's different. This would not be based off of tournament performance.

This would be based off of community servants or volunteer work to support the community, so there's no like it's not the best debater. It would be somebody who's willing to do work, kind of like at NSDA. Any thoughts from the community? Would this benefit you in your college apps. Would this be cool to have?

Rosie Bultman

Yeah, I think that it would be pretty useful. I feel like it sort of seems unimportant to some people, but I just came out of the college admissions process, and I feel like I was sad, because I

couldn't fully represent how much I like poured into debate because there's only like so much that I could say about it.

And then I was realizing that my application probably looks pretty similar to people who did a lot less in terms of coaching for our team and all of that.

And so I think, especially when it comes to bettering the community, it not only would just help kids who are really into parli, but it would provide some sort of incentive to community build and and do all of that. Thumbs up for me.

[
in chat:

Student Rep - Rose Weathers - Harriton - She/her to Everyone (1:04 PM)

It could work as an incentive to get people to do free work for NPDL

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Esha Shah

I'm Esha Shah, I'm an assistant coach at Nueva. In terms of the Honor Society, I feel like Rose kind of hit the nail on the head when they said that this would be an incentive to get students to do free work for the NPDL.

I don't necessarily think that students volunteering for the NPDL is a bad thing. I think it's community building. I think it's educational and it gives some leadership opportunities.

I'm pretty hesitant to kind of tack on an Honor Society.

You know, I think that a lot of the students that are specifically disadvantaged in this league and don't get those accolades in this league are people who are working, people who don't have free time to offer free service to NPDL, people who don't have the ability to give endless time to community service for accolades, I think in general, if we are trying to form a Honor Society to take away from, like what turn how tournaments disadvantage low-income and students and students of color, then we should not be doing it based off of uncompensated labor.

And I know that comes back to the funding issues that NPDL is having and how we can best allocate resources when we have very little resources, but in general I'm thinking that this is not a unique problem to this issue, but I also think that soliciting unpaid labor from minors by giving them an award is not the best way to do so.

Julie Herman

I think if the outline that you present essentially replicates the function that the NSDA is already doing... They have points allocated for service already. Most of the [Mountain View-Los Altos] students in this call are already Academic All American eligible, not because they compete a lot, which they absolutely do, but because they put in service at our summer camp and they get service points for that through the NSDA.

So I'm not sure that it is a useful application of our labor to create an Honor Society organization that replicates a function that is available to literally every single person who is in this call already.

I think if there is a question about parli points equity under the NSDA model, I would love to address that. I have had conversations with folks at NSDA, and the answer that I have gotten is that probably points equity is an easier move than getting into the national tournament, but both of those things are accessible with the application of the right amount of sponsorship money. I think I would prefer for this effort to be focused on parity in the NSDA, rather than re-replicating an entire system that already exists.

Michael Murray

I'm conflicted.

I think that there should be some sort of NPDL recognition.

Because these students work so hard in this league and they should be recognized for their hard work.

But I do agree with Julie, because I... One of the things I've noticed is I have students who compete in the NSDA and NPDL and their points get hammered because they want to do parli. And then the problem I have, and this is something I've been discussing with coaches around me. It puts them in a unique disadvantage compared to other students, especially when there is a point inflation problem happening on the NSDA level where I'm seeing a person get 150 points for one tournament of "practice rounds."

Or one person competing at 3 tournaments in one weekend and basically no show 2 of them, so that they can get points for it.

So I think maybe we should have something unique because the NSDA one has just become really wacky as of late.

Or we work to try to fix the NSDA one, because I think we do one or the other, but I do think there needs to be some sort of recognition, better recognition for NPDL students, especially with how hard college admittance is getting this year, I have so many students who I know or talk to your students who are getting rejected from colleges simply because to get into UC, at least in California, is nuts this year.

Zach Moss

So for starters, I just want to say that Esha and Julie absolutely nailed it with two of the primary things that come to mind for me on this question.

If we're going to do something that isn't just a replication of what NSDA is doing for points and not trying to fulfill points in that way, I think that we have one kind of one of two routes to go. The verses to model ourselves on CEDA's All American award, where your coach submits you or they're basically like here's a grade check, they're doing really well, you know, like those are the only requirements we use in order to give awards to students who have academically achieved while also doing debate. So that's one way of looking at it.

The other thing we can do is we can literally just make an award that has “All American” or Honor Society or some really fancy name and then just make it as easy as possible for students to qualify for. If we're going to do something that makes it easier for our students to get into college, then let's just do that. Let's just do that. Let's make it an important award. Let's talk about what goes into it, and then let's just give it to as many people as possible who qualify for it, because that's what it's all about, right? Our students.

Sierra Maciorowski-Hribar

I like what Zach was just saying, actually, about kind of having something that's accessible. I will note, I think that, another thought I had because I have, you know, kind of similar concerns to Esha about... trying to encourage as much free labor as possible... I think that there might be room for community awards. I think it's NPDA Nationals that maybe does something like this where people can be nominated and then get an award for being a good community member. I might remember that very wrongly, but something like that could be like an interesting way for people to be represented and acknowledge someone who's really helping the community as a whole.

The other thing that I will note is, for the problems that Michael was mentioning, I think service awards don't have quite the same problems as regular NSD points. So I think that like those their type of service awards probably work pretty well. And I agree with Julie that those might not need to be replicated as much.

But I think community awards or things that the community votes on or something could be kind of cool as well as having a more accessible thing.

[
in chat:

Adult Rep - Rodda John - Stuy - he/him to Everyone (1:11 PM)

APDA does the same thing -- "Distinguished Service Awards" among others

Adult Rep - Sierra Maciorowski - Mountain View to Everyone (1:13 PM)

Hm and I think there's also a coach award at NPDA (maybe USUs too?), right? That might be good for encouraging coaches to stay involved

Adult Rep - Julie Herman - duplicate account to Everyone (1:13 PM)

To be clear, parli is eligible for NSDA points, just at 2/3rds of main debate events, and service points are not penalized.

Adult Rep - Moss - Bishop O'Dowd to Everyone (1:14 PM)

Phi Rho Pi has an award like that
also best person I was judged by at nationals

]

Brier Buchalter

My intent was very much in line with what Zach Moss said. My opinion is it's already so difficult to get into college. I know how hard you all work. I've been doing this for a while, so if you all... you know how hard you're working to be here. I'm not saying this to be, like, pat on the head - it's a lot of work.

So I was really honestly thinking that even ... I don't think, uh, let's put it this way, perm the CP to be cheesy, right?

We can both push on the NSDA to get a marker that says you're... whatever they call it nowadays, I'm forgetting the title, All American or whatnot, and you could be involved, right? You could have double marks on your transcript, is, as you all know, as students, there's no limit to how many you have.

There are so many that are really economy based and if I had my way about it, I would make this something very easy to qualify for it.

You know, go to two or three tournaments or something like that. Write one statement on why like parli matters to you, reach out to 1 freshman if you're a senior, and just talk to them.

I agree with everyone that it's not a great idea... there's a line between free labor and volunteering... and not putting down either one. I'm more thinking about just getting acknowledgment for the work most people are already doing on their teams.

Like how many of the students in this room where others have helped another teammate or volunteered at a tournament or done something already that they get no recognition for?

We should have something that's easy to qualify for. I love this suggestion, frankly, I didn't think about it. It sounds like all the other college forms of parli already have this. So yeah, I think you should be able to nominate team members.

And here's my general thought. It's kind of, here's my hot take on record. It's kind of a scam, and college admissions are kind of a joke and they privilege the wealthy. And we all kind of know this right and the matter is, how much do you have access to these buffers. So if we can make one that's very, very, very accessible to members, our community and help them, why not do that?

Like you know, we can't reform the entire system, but we can at least use what we have here. So that's my kind of intent. I don't know if everybody is in on this, but that would be my desire. And I think we could recognize amazing things like community members.

We could even nominate somebody who was an amazing opponent who beat you and he felt great about the loss because it was a great round, right?

We could do things like that, acknowledge people for being good community members 'cause they're already doing it - why not give them some accolades for it.

I'm going to be sending out an email just as a heads up to try and get volunteers to develop this program. I'd like to have this done by the end of this year for all the students.

International Participation

Brier Buchalter

Should we allow international students to participate in NPDL?

During the last two years, several international organizations have reached out about participating in the NPDL. This could include non-US students participating in tournaments such as NPDL Fall or TOC, non-US teams being ranked within our rankings, non-US tournaments counting for points for NPDL, and non-US schools being eligible for voting membership. It could include all or none or some permutation of those, or something else entirely. We will discuss how the community feels about welcoming international debate teams.

I'm very, very curious about peoples' thoughts because we have been reached out now several times by different international groups wanting to participate.

Rosie Bultman

I have two things that immediately jumped in my mind, maybe I didn't think about it deeply enough before I'm talking right now.

The Berkeley High Tournament that we hosted, I actually got the privilege of judging some international kids, and I thought that it added a lot of value to the tournament and to the arguments that I heard.

I think actually, a Chinese school won the novice division, if I remember correctly.

And I judged the team twice, and I thought that like when it came to like perspective.

And just like the arguments made, it really was super interesting as a judge to evaluate.

So I think that the actual NPDL tournaments I think could welcome international students and it might just be like an interesting and educational experience for everybody.

I think that like when it comes to rankings and all of that, I don't necessarily see a problem with meshing both of the rankings. But I also think that it might be a good thing to have an international and national ranking just because of, if people want to put it on their college apps like we were just talking about, and if they're worse internationally than they are like nationally, and I don't know, I think that having both is probably important. 'cause most activities like sports, for example, there's national, there's state rankings, there's national rankings, there's international rankings. And I feel like we should have those tiers as well.

Tamanna Gandhi

I think that, as Rosie was saying, that there are a lot of benefits to having more diverse voices in debate and seeing the different opinions and arguments, but I think that the practicality of having international students and regulating whether or not they're shady for-profit organizations, or if they follow the same rules as the NPDL. It's harder to regulate the different rules that schools are following internationally versus nationally, because right now there's rules that you must attend, like 3 tournaments per year, but you can't really regulate that in different countries in different places, so maybe having different international rankings could help, but I think it's really hard to administer international teams.

Rose Weathers

I think that'd be a good idea, what Rosie said. That's funny, 'cause we have very similar names. So anyways, it made a lot of sense about the perspectives that they would bring to the tournament.

One thing that I would think would have to happen if we did have international students is like 1 getting a topic committee that has international people on it from like those same region.

Also in terms of like when people get motions, I think something that would be good, and even for national tournaments too is having, in addition or instead of or combined with an info slide having an origin slide, 'cause there are some topics... We got a topic about single family zoning and I live outside of Philadelphia, and that's not something we really talk about here, but I know what it is, but it's not a huge concern for us, but it is in California.

And we didn't know that. If we had gotten like an origin side, telling us like why is this a topic that would have been helpful, and I think, especially if you're like an international student, there are a lot of things that are like kind of uniquely American that it would be hard to understand where the the your opponents and the judges would be coming from. I think that would be something that helped them out a lot.

Julie Herman

I agree that in principle this sounds like a nice idea, and we want to be inclusive and have a lot of different voices. I am concerned that the NPDL, as it exists, is already an amalgamation of a lot of different interest groups that pull really hard, oftentimes in really different directions, and that figuring out how to accommodate additional people who are not only... may potentially have very different interests, and again I think, as was mentioned by the Washington student rep, have very different or hard for us to access regulatory systems could create additional tension in an organization that already has a lot of internal cultural tensions.

[
in chat:

Adult Rep - Moss - Bishop O'Dowd to Everyone (1:20 PM)

why would we deny students access to debate?

but also good luck making your 9 AM PST rounds XD

]

Brier Buchalter

I'm just going to read a comment from Zach in the chat, which I'd agree with.

My general feeling is why would we want to deny access to students in general?

I happen to be privileged enough to be born in the United States. I did nothing to earn that.

There's a lot of students who might be international that would love to take part in what we've built. So I agree, there's kind of a moral call on this.

It's a matter of I agree.

Also with the concerns of administering it fairly though. The equity concerns are also there.

Sierra Maciorowski-Hribar

Yeah, I guess I just have one question. If there's been outreach from international organizations so far, has this been from people who are used to doing a like, you know, kind of like APDA/NPDA format - for for those of you who don't know the college formats just kind of like a like you know like two person versus two person 6 speeches per round kind of format. Or has this been Asian Parliamentary debate, or World Schools debate? Curious about that.

Brier Buchalter

Some combination of all of those, I mean, even some that are a little closer to NPDA, maybe. So there's been a combination of it's not any one particular format. In fact, two people reached out to me.

That said, hey, we'll do whatever format you're doing, we would like to participate in this, we're already doing kind of parli, we don't have a lot of tournaments, we'll just do whatever you guys are doing, give us the rules just so we can participate, we'll host the tournament here, you can come, we'll come to you. So some of these groups were very enthusiastic and they were somewhat agnostic. Some probably do have more like we're doing Asian Parli, British Parli, we're doing more like NPDA this style like they're doing a different style that might have a correlate here, I would say. I mean to give you a little more, like, my gut feeling. I think most of them would do whatever we were doing. So I think if we encourage something, there's also a chance of spreading this style of parli internationally, which I think, it is a cool benefit itself.

Sierra Maciorowski-Hribar

Yeah, if I can make one tiny little follow-up. I will just note, I think, because my concern is, you know, I think there already is a growing movement for World Schools debate in the US and I think that's probably good, but it's definitely a different format than what we do because it's less extemporaneous and stuff like that.

So I think that, as long as there's still, you know, continued preservation of what this format is and limited prep and all of that.

I think that's kind of important, but if people are willing to participate and try it out, I think that's great.

Brier Buchalter

I actually coach on university level BP and it's very different, so I know what you're talking about.

And I'm also down for I think the cool advantage could be spreading this internationally.

The other formats are spreading internationally 'cause they're making the effort, but we haven't really tried, so I think that could be an added benefit.

Michael Murray

We should absolutely go international.

I know there's issues with it. I'm a World Schools coach. I've been coaching Worlds for about four years now at the national circuit level and they're able to do it.

I think one of the things that is able to make international is having online. That's the only way you're going to be able to really making international tournament. But I can also speak to you that going to tournaments like Harvard or UPenn where they had international students, it was some of the best experiences of the year for my students. They got to debate people from Serbia from China. We had a judge from Kazakhstan that was awesome. We also had the head coach of Team Singapore judges. So we had some of the best rounds and most fulfilling rounds and some of the strongest judging at some of these international tournaments, so I think we should definitely do something international. It would make it better for everyone.

Ben Lee

I personally have had a lot of experience with international debate both World Schools, Asian parliamentary. I've done tournaments in Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Hong Kong etc.

And I clearly think that having international presence is very beneficial because it provides really, really different ideas than what I conventionally just see like the American parli. So I think first of all it's really beneficial.

But secondly, in terms of like I'm done with college admissions this year. But in terms of what people said would be beneficial for college admissions, having an international presence makes that tournament much bigger, in terms of its reputation, 'cause it's now seen as an international tournament that isn't just like a regional or national tournament. So I think that also might be beneficial.

But then again, because I do acknowledge things like time difference like that's the thing I had to wake up till like 3:00 AM here to like do tournaments in Hong Kong. So I clearly think that they would have to adapt to the US system. Follow the US parli system and the US time zones, if they were to participate in these tournaments.

Brier Buchalter

There's some ways of handling that, Ben. We could say the national championship will be based here and we could invite people, but we can also allow them to have tournaments internationally where people can do. One of the cool things about online, I've actually seen this and it seems like it's working is you can actually schedule rounds in a narrower time zone... and there's some cool things you can do, I don't know what the future will hold with that, but the university is already experimenting with those.

Sam Timinsky

My concern here is that we call ourselves a National League. We are not even 10 states. It seems like every single time I hear about the next layer of outreach... I understand the notion to go get

communities that already exist and integrate them. But I think we are ultimately long-term avoiding the actual real grunt work of outreach, which is to go out to existing programs in other states, go to schools that don't have debate programs and lobby for parli and build out. Idaho teams seem to be like they should be important to us as well. we're gonna have to do that work event.

Actually, if we want to really build this league out in this sort of way, that it seems like the Board and the community wants us to be truly national, you know we're going to have to do it, and I feel like we're just avoiding that.

I think the expansion of the outreach group was an obvious gesture in that direction, which was good. I don't think opening up another wave for them to deal with is necessarily a good idea. I footstomp all the concerns about time zone. I have attended conferences as a presenter in Japan. It is hellish, and I was 25 when I did that, not 14. So I don't think we should be opening up this can of worms. I think we should be doing more outreach, but it should be in terms of the US. Once we're robust, we could have you know single standalone events, but I would not be making this a big priority.

David Yastremski

I was just going to go back to Rodda's commentary about letting the market speak for itself. But I did have a question. If there's an international team that is currently attending - and I'll also raise the question of international schools - are they not able to earn bids even if they are technically an American territory school in an international location?

Brier Buchalter

Yeah, we don't clearly have a set ruleset around this.

We would interpret the rules so there are rules that say you can go as an independent entry.

I believe they say you have to be a... Do they say you have to be a US-based high school debater, Artem? We define age. I can't remember if we define geography or citizenship, so it gets a little...

Artem Raskin

Well, you have to be a US high school to be a member school, and...

Brier Buchalter

Right, but to qual as an independent entry. Could they do that? That's what I'm thinking. Okay, so I think hypothetically somebody could, but their school couldn't be a member. It would probably be very hard and there's no precedent for that, so it would be tricky.

David Yastremski

If we're raising the concern about the TOC and perhaps the Fall tournament, do we allow this format to proliferate in other areas of the country on their own terms, and then if we go back to

Rodda's comment earlier, let's sort of let the market speak for itself, where we can sanction tournaments, let them run it. But you know when it comes to these two particular events, obviously some of those considerations have to be taken into effect with regards to time zones and whether it's hybrid which have yet to in fact be decided. But I think to a certain degree, the access isn't necessarily a bad thing either.

Especially since a lot of these schools are attending... they are at Berkeley, they're at Stanford, they are at Harvard, so it's something, maybe again, we recognize the inclusivity of the activity there.

Artem Raskin

I think that there were a lot of great points made about the value of having international students at tournaments, but I don't think that anyone gave a reason why that value has to come from TOC specifically, for instance, as opposed to invitationals. As David just mentioned, the market decides - if an invitational wants to allow international teams, then there will be invitationals in the United States with international teams. So far that has been happening on a very limited level, which means that there is not a significant amount of international interest in US parli invitationals.

I think the question is whether the organization specifically is built to handle international competition. So yes, international competition is good, but we need to give reasons why it should specifically be the NPDL facilitating that. We can think of examples of particular leagues that are based on particular regions. So, David, for instance, you have the New Jersey league. And you're running the New Jersey State Tournament. I, as a California coach, wouldn't try to get into the New Jersey State Tournament, because I recognize that there is value to having those regional competitions. But I might send my kids to your invitational, the Ridge Invitational, because that one is intended for everyone from the country to come to.

And I think we should be making that same distinction and making the distinction between saying international competition is good versus every single tournament, including leagues that are specifically built around regionality should have to include it.

Increasing TOC Size

Brier Buchalter

There have been requests to have a larger field at the TOC. This will be an open discussion to weigh out that option.

I do want to give a little historical insight.

And these are some open secrets from very early on.

When the NPDL existed, pretty much everybody qualed to the TOC, and if you wrote an at large bid and had an application, you were very, very, very likely to get accepted.

I think in some years it was 100% acceptance rate. If you just like in the olden days, you used to turn in paperwork or a video or different things like that. And over time... I know it's not not everybody qualed who wanted to, but I think in the past there was a near 100% acceptance rate.

Historically it's changed a lot back and forth on how what percentage of the teams call and don't participate as we've grown as an organization.

There's been a talk about expanding the field, so more teams could participate and the benefits that would come from that. And then there's kind of a counterpoint to having a smaller organization.

So and some of you that were here longer than me, please do fact check, maybe as I'm hearing this all second hand, I wasn't around back then, so that's what I heard from some of the people that were involved. I'm curious what everybody thinks about potentially expanding the size of the TOC or keeping it as is.

[
in chat:

Adult Rep - Julie Herman - duplicate account to Everyone (1:34 PM)

Wait a hot second, that's not remotely true.

Adult Rep - Moss - Bishop O'Dowd to Everyone (1:34 PM)

yeah, at least not in 2013

Adult Rep - Rodda John - Stuy - he/him to Everyone (1:35 PM)

#factcheckneeded

I wasn't here but I don't use evidence when I debate, the warrants here don't make sense

]

Zach Moss

Well, let me just say that when I was involved in the NPDL as a college student judging at Nationals, that definitely wasn't the case in 2013, 2014 - or when I was trying to get teams in in 2018, so I'm not entirely sure about that whole "everyone gets in."

I do think, though, that we do need a national tournament where everybody gets in. NPDA, which is one of the many college parli styles that we have modeled our hybrid league off of has two national tournaments, one with a qualification system, one where you basically get to bring all of your teams. We should do that too.

We should have a national tournament that is called the National Tournament that the only rule is, you had to debate this year and we're going to cap your school at six teams, or five teams.

Pick a number. Make sure it's four or higher. And then let's just do that, right?

The People's Tournament and then the Qualifier Tournament. It makes the experience better for everybody. Yes, it does require the league to run 2 national tournaments, but I'm sure from my heart of hearts that there would be a lot of excitement in running a national tournament.

No, this would not work in the fall semester. You need to run the tournament basically next to the other Tournament of Champions. Otherwise the students will all see that one of these as the real

national tournament and the other one is not. When I say national tournament, what I mean is, the season-ending championship tournament.

We should just have two of those instead of one, or at least that's my stance on the subject.

I don't want to use the word should I'm not a topic writer.

Brier Buchalter

Do you have thoughts on... whatever you're positing, hypothetically, two...

Would you think this one should expand the size of its TOC?

Zach Moss

Yeah, also, we should also lower the number of points required to qualify.

You know, I think that a team with three or four elim breaks, that should be good enough to get into the national tournament without having to hold your breath in the at-large section, like in all like in full transparency, this happened to my team. I submitted one team because of the whole like you get extra points if none of your other teams come to the TOC. So I submitted my seniors knowing that you know, with the 10 extra points they got from that that they would make it in. We still didn't make it in in the first round and we had to hold our breath on the waiting list. Yes, we did eventually make it in, which was awesome, they had a great time, so thank you for that. But you know the fact that like seniors who had literally gone to 8 or 9 tournaments and had you know, not a lot of success, but some amount of success throughout the year, the fact that we weren't able to get that team in even with the extra handicaps we got, I think speaks to too high of a burden for this tournament.

Rose Weathers

I have two comments, the first being a question.

What are the acceptance rates for the TOC? Is that public knowledge or something that isn't public knowledge? And maybe it would be productive to decide on what that rate should be. Should it be 100%? And should it be like 80%? Or like is it better to to to decide on qualifications first and like the pool and the percentage acceptance afterwards?

I don't know what is the thing that people find most important to consider.

And then second, another thing that is important to think about is that students who would want to go to both national tournaments would also have to pay to go to both national tournaments, which could be kind of expensive. I'm just thinking about the costs of... yeah, fee waivers do exist, but not everyone is going to get a fee waiver and it'd be hard to send teams to both if you're not going to get one. So that would mean attendance might be lower at the second national tournament that isn't the qualifying one. And so then the purpose might be a bit defeated.

Brier Buchalter

I just want to chime in really quickly because I take every possible conceivable moment to do this like I was.

I pushed hard to get scholarship stuff on the website and I wish more people took it and I've never said no like any scholarship I've ever seen applied to here, we've always said no, or at least really heavily worked with the people.

So if you are ever in a spot, tattoo it, put it everywhere out in the world. If there's ever a financial reason you can't attend tournament please let us know, and as long as myself and I think the other people on the border all agree, we'll try and do everything we can do.

But I do agree, especially if they require travel like.

When I was a kid, my God, I probably couldn't afford to.

Do one let alone for sure two, so I can empathize with that.

[
in chat:

Viewer - lila lavender (she, her) to Everyone (1:39 PM)

Yeah, that happened to 2-3 of EVSD's teams who competed and regularly broke at tournaments, and were replaced by teams that had far less points then them.

Adult Rep - Rodda John - Stuy - he/him to Everyone (1:39 PM)

This year there are 500 rows in the rankings, last year there was 700, in 2017-2018 there were 400

Me to Everyone (1:39 PM)

acceptance rate is not a relevant number because most teams with a low chance of getting in don't apply

Adult Rep - Julie Herman - duplicate account to Everyone (1:39 PM)

We had students who didn't apply because they thought they had no chance. I'm not sure if acceptance rates are illustrative.

Adult Rep - Rodda John - Stuy - he/him to Everyone (1:39 PM)

I've decided there's some value in empirics after all

]

Rodda John

I think 2 end of the year national tournaments is a slam dunk, no-bad-idea idea. It just should happen.

A few reasons why - I think opportunities for people from different regions to compete is just good. I don't think that should only be limited to the top teams. I think we're sort of shooting ourselves in the foot there. I think it bifurcates local leagues in really bad ways. I think this is a really straightforward idea. I also think there's a tournament quality difference between a

tournament that has a lot of, say, processes that are well-defined, run by people who run a lot of tournaments. That's probably not to be underestimated - question mark?

Oh and also the TOC should be bigger. I did some looking at the numbers. There were 350 teams ranked five years ago. Now there are 700 and something like. This just seems sort of nuts.

I don't really think any arguments about breaking more teams or having more outrounds work because there are just more days in the weekend, more hours in the weekend that we can use. I don't really understand what the pushback is here, and I think any argument that's like, well the tournament should remain elite doesn't make sense, because, first of all, the number of teams has increased, but also, ostensibly, there's still a single elimination bracket. If you really want your eliteness, just only show up until octos. I just don't get it, let's just let more people debate.

Brier Buchalter

I just think giving more people access... I looked at those numbers as well and I'm like, well we're growing this much, we can break to double octas, we could have, instead of 60, we could go 90 or even 120. I have no problem with TOC being one of the biggest tournaments here.

I do want to put this out though for the people that are running this, like helping you run it and you know this rather, it is harder to run a longer tournament. It does take more time and to all of our teams who are like I'm very tired - it does mean an extra elim or two.

We probably could still run 7 rounds, but I very much do have the same opinion for a long time I felt the threshold can be lowered a lot.

I have no problem with the two-tournament idea.

I will say this again though I do want to voice this to the community.

I do believe the current Board is very tapped doing work you might not expect. It is extremely exhausting.

So the question is, can we find a whole second crew when we couldn't find a first crew for this tournament?

Can we find a second crew that can have that weekend. And like we don't pay the current Board or anybody who's involved in running this tournament.

Are we able to both fundraise and then find people and these are these are a series of burdens. So please do look for these volunteering opportunities. It's not just setting policy or voting on things, but it's like are you willing to spend - I don't know, whoever has run a tournament here, what is it - 60 to 80 hours for a giant tournament like this you're going to put into it.

It depends on how much you're doing, but responding to all the emails, checking everything, it's a huge burden. It really is a huge burden and I don't want to underplay it. And I'm not the one doing it, but I think we should look at our community and see if we can do that.

[

in chat:

Adult Rep - Julie Herman - duplicate account to Everyone (1:42 PM)

Big +1 to all of what Rodda is saying

Adult Rep - Rodda John - Stuy - he/him to Everyone (1:42 PM)

Pressing "break 'em" to break 32 teams is equi-difficulty to pressing "break 'em" to break 16

Adult Rep - Moss - Bishop O'Dowd to Everyone (1:43 PM)

double the judges required

]

Sierra Maciorowski-Hribar

I tend to agree with almost everything, or probably everything, that Rodda said. I think that just having more people have the opportunity to debate is a good thing.

And I think it's especially good in terms of encouraging the growth of the activity.

Because, for example, in the BP National Championship, each school gets a certain number of entries. The same is true for NPDA Nationals. Actually, I don't even know if there's a limit there, I forget. And all of these different formats have some sort of national championship where schools can just send teams and maybe younger debaters can get access to like really high quality rounds and lose terribly and learn some really good things from that.

And I think that it also is really helpful in terms of allowing teams who are, you know doing well, but maybe don't meet like an exact point threshold from not being able to attend a national championship, but also I think takes away some of the stress of that which I think can be really really hard for kids to be like 0.1 points away. I think we had a student this year who was .2 away from qualifying and there's one last round that's the qual round and I think it could be really good for students' mental health as well to just, know that each school gets a certain number of entries, a bunch of people get to compete seems like a pretty good thing, and the fact that we could maybe have hybrid tournaments creates a whole new world in terms of space concerns and stuff like that. So I think that there's a lot of benefit.

I think that the drawbacks can probably be addressed with a lot of the like volunteer labor that already gets turned away, perhaps.

[

in chat:

Adult Rep - Rodda John - Stuy - he/him to Everyone (1:43 PM)

Yeah but you only need to break to 32 if the prelim pool requires it, which means you have more judges in prelims

Adult Rep - Moss - Bishop O'Dowd to Everyone (1:44 PM)

true, but sunday morning placement is a different beast than prelim placement

]

Sam Timinsky

I think this is a good idea, and it also has a couple of benefits in terms of bringing the community together. There's obviously tension between teams that are at this minute one-to-five-point gap away from qualification being overstepped by just teams getting in because they happen to live in a place.

This splinters those two groups in half, where a lot of that regional building work is happening in one location and the elitism tapping in another location. That's probably good for depoliticizing this tournament a little bit.

Two, I think this creates an opportunity to get rid of point thresholds. To be perfectly honest, the point threshold has moved rather dramatically three years in a row. I believe it was 35 in the spring, then 42 in the I'm sorry 35 in the fall, 42 in the spring. Then it was just straight up 42. Now it's 47 and. At the same time, tournament average size dropped significantly so it became nigh impossible. I had sophomores in tears at the end, because they're like, I would have qualified 2 years ago easily with the same performance, I would have been borderline last year with the same performance, and for no other reason than the point threshold moved, I am not getting to go. And these were not kids that were not putting in the hard work.

I think the simpler and more elegant solution in this scenario where we have two tournaments is - the ranking just determines. The top 64 teams are offered an entry into the equivalent of the NPTE - the Qualified tournament.

And then you just go down the line. 37 said no? Okay, 65 gets access, until you're full, and that's fine.

It probably also saves Joel and Joel's successor time for having to do the calculation. All of this goes away. It saves the TOC director time. It accomplishes functionally the same thing as the points do. And it just reduces the number of variables you have to deal with.

Esha Shah

And something I just wanted to add to that is that I think everyone here acknowledges that accessibility to the current TOC is really hard for regional schools, and that's why we have those added points bounces. But something that sucks, I think, is that when you are given 15 extra points to go, attend TOC and you go attend TOC and then 14 or 13 or however many out of the schools that break are NorCal and you've only one four ballots. I think that sucks, and I think that adding that point balance to these teams and just like sending them in to deal with teams who have had a lot more institutional access and resources is kind of cruel and is not at all stabilizing the regional differences in this league, and I think it's, honestly, I think it even even for NorCal teams at the end creates ego for them like it's like, okay, we have this tournament, they got in on a point balance and then we still beat them. I think it just, it's really, really bad for individual relationships, routine teams from East Coast and NorCal. And I think having a type of tournament which you don't need to qualify to that is accessible to the different types of judges from different regions and is depoliticized is really important because these kids need to be meeting each other at the same level and it should not be like so I want either really competitive

to the point where it's like people are going like demolished because they don't have regional access, which is really bad, I think, for an overall institutional equity.

Brier Buchalter

One thing I just want to let people know really quickly. For some reason it doesn't get talked about a lot, but I do think it's important to say is that most of the qualifiers that happened with the Wild Card and at large bid and the point expansion, really, they didn't go to new regions or just random people from areas - it went to people of color and people in certain financial situations. So there is a trade-off in this year and that's something we can think about is not just looking at the point threshold.

Sam Timinsky

Brier, I'm sorry. I'm not sure that's true. Three of my teams got in at-large. We have no problem with access. That's a third of the wildcards, almost

Zach Moss

I'm just a huge NPDA Nationals stan. It was my favorite tournament of all time, so I'm going to circle back to one more great thing that they did that we could also do if we had a tournament like that.

Teams should be allowed to register particular partnerships as novice partnerships, basically saying like hey, you know we're bringing students to nationals, but like we're bringing them for the nationals experience, so that they get to, you know, a taste of this before they're juniors or seniors.

And then when elims start, you get to like look at all the teams who were listed as novice only and then you get to have a breakout elim for the kids who are younger who get to do elims at nationals and get that experience of the big stage while not disrupting anything that you do with the tournament at large right?

And I'm not talking, like oh well, you know the we're gonna break two double-octo final brackets. It's usually just like you know the open double the open double octo and then like a semis bracket with like you know the top the top four novice teams.

But that's a thing that we obviously cannot do at this tournament. And it's like one of the best parts, honestly, as both a judge and as a coach like it is legit, one of the best parts of Nationals. So you know if we do go in that direction, we should definitely consider including something like that.

Brier Buchalter

Yeah, I dig that there's a lot of comments and they're mentioning different tournaments. I know NYPDL does that too, and it's pretty cool when the kids get to interact with the novices.

There's problems with always having it that way, maybe, but it is really nice and the novices get to learn from the very experienced debaters.

Joel Jacobs

So we have a few topics that've been coming up, and I'm not going to talk about all of them. I'm going to try to focus on the main ones.

Two tournaments versus one tournament - I don't really have a strong opinion about, but I would note that two tournaments means you need more labor, which is either compensated or uncompensated. And we talked about the problems with both of those.

Qualification methods - it is a discussion for another day, or at least not one that I'm going to address 'cause I want to focus it is separate and I don't want to focus on just the size of this TOC, and I totally sympathize with the arguments for letting more people participate, more inclusion, that's great.

I just want to make sure that people are thinking about the tradeoffs that are there. Which is that you either have a tougher break or you have a longer tournament. A longer tournament means more days. It's already 2 ½. More days means more time for students, especially students who have to travel to the tournament. It becomes more of an endurance contest among people who just get tired because they have to go back to school the next day, or they've already missed a day of school.

It does mean that there are higher costs for everybody, especially more hired judge costs, which we then have to figure out how to cover, probably by raising the cost of the tournament and then more people need reg breaks, so it does drive costs pretty significantly if we're hiring judges for an additional day.

So if the league decides that that's a valid trade-off and that they want to make that trade-off, that's fine, but there are very significant costs associated with increasing the length of the tournament that people should at least be mindful of if they say that's what they want.

And just one last note, in terms of the argument that, well, if there's a regional bump, then people from other parts of the country are just going to come here and get crushed, I would note that two seasons ago, Ridge was here from New Jersey that had the benefit of the sort of the big bump of being a regional entry, and they made the final round. So, often schools from other parts of the country can surprise us with their ability to compete head-to-head with schools that have traditionally been at the TOC.

Artem Raskin

Three things. First of all, 100% echo what Joel said about trade-offs. We cannot have it all. So for instance, in the past, TOC had a very difficult break. The membership voted in a proposal to require a minimum number of teams that we had to break. Then there was a discussion a few years ago about whether we need to have 7 prelim rounds. The membership said no, we really want 7 prelim rounds. So once you build that in, then a larger field size would mean a longer tournament, but then that creates issues of - if you have to have more rounds on Friday, students have to miss school, they don't want to do that. If it goes back to being an in-person tournament, it means that they have to get another night's worth of hotel costs. We cannot have it all. Now,

we can discuss whether or not some of these tradeoffs are worth it, but we shouldn't pretend like there is just a slam dunk solution here.

The second thing I'm going to say is about the qualifiers. I think the membership needs to ask itself whether or not we think there is value in having a tournament that people need to qualify for. Perhaps the membership decides that there should be a national tournament that is open to all - that's great, maybe we can run that, although it will be larger and harder to host. If we think that there should be a tournament with some sort of qualification rules, then all of the issues with this year's tournament are going to continue. Lowering the threshold or raising the threshold will not change the fact that, if there is a threshold, then there will be a team that is 0.1 points below that threshold, it just changes which particular team we're talking about. That's not unique.

Lastly, I would say that if we expand the size of the tournament beyond what it is right now, then we are for sure locking out the possibility of having these tournaments be in person in the future. Maybe the community decides that they want to stick to having online tournaments for TOC forever, in which case that's a non-issue, but if the community wants TOC to ever be in person again, then there are going to be size limitations imposed on us by the size of campuses that can host which, since we've usually done at high schools, usually had about 40 to 50 teams capacity.

Katie Wilson

Just for fun, when Sam said let's look at the top 64 teams, I did a quick COUNTIF formula of the currently ranked top 64 teams and 44 are from CA1 (I don't really know if that's Northern California?), 7 from New York, 5 from CA3, 4 from Connecticut, 3 from CA4, 2 from CA2, 1 from New Jersey, 1 from Pennsylvania, 1 from Oregon.

So I'm like wow, that doesn't really feel that much like a national tournament... Just throwing that out there. So I feel like the question to answer is like what do we want a national culminating event to look like? If it is just the top 64 kids in the nation, then yeah, let's just do that. If we want equal representation from every state or region, then we need to have similar to what NSDA Nationals does, which is each region has a qualification process and not so you bring to represent your region to the NSDA Nationals.

I think that two tournaments is a great idea. I don't really know that much about what the labor constraints would be. I've worked tons and tons of tournaments all across Oregon all year long, I'd be happy to... I feel like there are a lot of people who have lots of tournament experience that would be happy to help. You, as the NPDL Board, don't have to do it all yourselves.

So I just feel like the real question to answer is what philosophically do we want our Nationals to look like?

I also think that from a competitive perspective, the best kids are going to win anyway, whether or not you have 500 kids and my really crappy team that didn't pick up a ballot, but is happy to be here, comes or not doesn't really matter, because the best team is going to win anyway.

I feel like I'm sort of struggling with - what are we arguing about? Let's just have lots of cool opportunities for kids.

[
in chat:

Adult Rep - Joel Jacobs - Berkeley - he/him to Everyone (1:57 PM)

I forgot to mention room rental costs as an additional significant expense. As costs go up, that creates a different kind of barrier.

Viewer - lila lavender (she, her) to Everyone (1:59 PM)

The best team does not = the teams that qual to qualifying tournaments, there are lots of reasons as to why some of the best teams don't qual to those sorts of tournaments. Nearly every year at NPDA, there is a breakout team that gets to deep elims that was not present at NPTE.

]

Michael Murray

Two quick things. First of all, I think if we're going to have this "everyone go to nationals," NPDA-style event, which I 100% am behind, I think it needs to be online. And then do the other one in person, have it a little bit more restricted.

The second thing I'll mention because there was talk about this from, I think, Esha and a couple others about these other teams getting in on equity and stuff.

I wish I had one of the equity teams or the wildcard teams. They didn't do too hot, but they had a blast and they were just grateful for the opportunity to make it there. So I think this idea of like, oh, they're gonna not have a good time is completely wrong. Speaking as a coach of one of the teams who got in that way and had a blast doing it, even though they picked up 3 ballots. This was one of the highlights of their year.

Sierra Maciorowski-Hribar

I have four main things to say, but I'll keep them brief.

One, I think I would probably be pretty willing to sacrifice a prelim round to get one additional elim and let more debaters compete. Maybe that's something we could readdress as a league and think about.

Two, I think having a long national tournament seems very reasonable, like what Julie said in the chat.

I think in person it's this joyous cumulative event that's probably worth skipping a few extra hours of school for. Realistically, people travel on Thursday anyways, so maybe you missed some hours hanging out in the hotel. I think that seems pretty reasonable because it's this big event.

Three, online, not everyone debates the whole tournament, so it seems reasonable to have it be longer as well because, if you're if you're really into it, maybe you debate a lot of rounds, and that's probably a good thing.

Fourth, finally, I think in terms of in-person space concerns, I would just note that you know, because NPDL is a nonprofit I think maybe there is the option of looking to college campuses

instead of high schools. Because my understanding is, the rates don't have to be too terrible, and if there's enough teams attending that probably reduces the cost per team and stuff like that.

[
in chat:

Adult Rep - Artem Raskin - Washington - he/him
as a teacher who has to actually teach Friday classes, missing school IS a big deal

Adult Rep - Joel Jacobs - Berkeley - he/him to Everyone (2:02 PM)
We were pitched by a college for the TOC that didn't happen. Room rates were pretty high.

Adult Rep - Sierra Maciorowski - Mountain View to Everyone (2:03 PM)
If I recall correctly @Joel that college was a community college, right? I do feel like CCs probably have less flexibility in budget than private schools (at least guessing off of SCU's general willingness to host non-profits, hah)

Adult Rep - Joel Jacobs - Berkeley - he/him to Everyone (2:05 PM)
@Sierra, yes, it was. We could do a search for a university that is willing to host our tournament at a reasonable cost in a location that makes sense, but I know that UCB, for example, charges its own teams a LOT of money for rooms (which is why Cal Parli and NPDI could cut their entry fees in half when they went online).
Schools of all kinds are dealing with budgetary strain by charging internal organizations (and external ones) the full cost of janitorial etc.
]

Team Size Imbalance

Brier Buchalter

There were four different events. I coalesced this into one action item. I was contacted by tournament directors, a team, and a regional director for a region of the US. So are there any issues that need to be addressed with team size imbalance?

And there were four main things that I was contacted about.

One was how do we best address tournament entry percentage and diversity of team?

The second is, are there issues that arise with extraordinarily large teams and point calculations? Is there an advantage or disadvantage to address with a large and or small team?

Three, should schools with only a single parli debater be eligible for NPDL voting membership?

Four, should TOC school eligibility rules require that at some point during the season, at least two students from that school compete at some tournament? Would this encourage a student who is the only debater at their school to grow their school's parli squad?

[no requests to speak]

Support for Under-resourced Teams

Brier Buchalter

Support for smaller or under resourced teams. Historically some teams have struggled either due to size, coaches, or geographic challenges.

This is an opportunity to speak to the broader community, about how to best support one another, so we talked earlier about potentially to be very honest, like.

This would be a massive undertaking week.

There's never been something like this in NPDL.

It would take probably a broad expansion and maybe like real changes in fundraising, but so we could hire coaches or try and do something like that.

I think the weekly one's viable.

Does anybody else have suggestions or ideas for how we could support some teams that are struggling with resources or coaching staff?

Katie Wilson

Hi, sorry to talk twice in a row, but I brought this up last year - why don't you facilitate a mentorship program? You could have a bank of coaches who are like, I would sign up to be a person to call when somebody has questions you have that group their contact info and then you have another group of people who are like I'm new or I'm a student and I want more adult help - and you just sort of match those people up.

We've had success on our team doing that very casually pairing up with other teams and learning from them.

Like Artem, was saying before, some of the best learning happens from advice you got formally and informally from other coaches. So I just feel like you don't have to set up a full program. You could just facilitate those connections. You just need coaches ready to answer the phone when new coaches or inexperienced coaches have questions.

Rose Weathers

I like Katie's idea for the facilitating contact between coaches.

And another thing in that same vein that I think would be helpful at least for my team, 'cause it's me and my partner and like freshmen, essentially. We don't really have anyone to practice with.

And so having a way for students to connect and just be, like, do you want to meet on Zoom at 5:00 o'clock on Tuesday to have like a chill lowkey round of debate?

I feel like that would be good to just facilitate two teams like meeting up and debating for practice. That would be helpful.

[

in chat:

Adult Rep - Sarah Wheeler - Piedmont - they/them to Everyone (2:06 PM)

I think when it comes to collectively supporting smaller teams, and the mentorship program being mentioned, the judging conflict policies need to radically be changed in order to facilitate that

Adult Rep - Sierra Maciorowski - Mountain View to Everyone (2:07 PM)

Berkeley is also a public school! Might be worth trying the private route to avoid those constraints, I think those private school endowments are still thriving on the stock market these days.

Adult Rep - Sierra Maciorowski - Mountain View to Everyone (2:07 PM)

Berkeley is also a public school! Might be worth trying the private route to avoid those constraints, I think those private school endowments are still thriving on the stock market these days.

]

Qualification to TOC

Brier Buchalter

It was always a delicate balance to decide the correct line for TOC qualifications, let's discuss what a bright line ought be for TOC qualifications. I feel like we talked about this a lot. It came up previously with the size of TOC.

In theory we could just expand size and open to more teams and we get more wildcard bids with the already existing structure.

I think we've expressed a lot of this, but does anybody want to crystallize or mention any comments about how one should qualify for the TOC?

[no requests to speak]

Topic Writing

Brier Buchalter

Topic writing and evaluations.

Tournaments are held with a wide variety of topic and topic writers. Continually, topics have been an issue. Are there any guidelines or goals the community would like to suggest?

Does anybody have any suggestions for topic writing, community guidelines, or what NPDL might do?

Zach Moss

I think that when we talk about topics, one of the things that we're experiencing is the tension between our goals to make things more accessible as well as focus in on specific subjects.

Let me give you an example. We want our students to be able to enter any debate and be able to engage with whatever that particular topic is. But at the same time, we also want to write topics that our students don't debate all the time, and so they can't use their generic memories or their files or whatever in those contexts.

So what we end up having is these hyper-focused really narrow, hard-to-debate topics that ultimately leave the debates very shallow. I think that this is ultimately going to be attention that just continues to exist if the community wants these two - not contradictory - but certainly two ideas that exist in tension with one another.

Personally, as a topic writer, I like to go simple. I like to focus in on the things that my students are likely to have knowledge about while balancing that with focusing on the balance of ground on the affirmative and negative.

If you see me on your topic committee, just know that you know my topics are more US centric and I like my students to know what agent does which action.

And I think that you know, for all of our desire to let our students know more about the world, the fact of the matter remains that right now we are a community.

You know of people who are living in the United States for the most part and thus, having a strong knowledge about how the United States does things domestically and internationally doesn't need to be read as a legitimization of that behavior, but rather can be better understood understanding the machine so that we can then interrogate like what to do about it next.

And so I think that's me personally, just like slipping in my viewpoints, I think that policymaking debate is good, I think US topics are good and I think that our students should know more about these things.

Michael Murray

Two things I want to discuss.

First of all, like I said earlier, I coach a lot of World Schools debate, so I think the international topics are doable. I've seen it. I have students work on it even in their limited-prep world rounds, they're able to handle international topics. I think one way to get around what Zach's talking about is, maybe we increase the use of topic areas. I thought the Sahel topic area was pretty cool at this last tournament.

The other thing I've noticed too is I'd like more international topics. I'd like more international topics, particularly about Latin America. I don't see a lot about Latin America, and I think that could be a really rich area. I have a lot of Latino students, and that's something that I feel that they would like to schedule a bit more of. At least that's what they both expressed to me.

I just don't think there's a lot of debate about what's called the Global South. I think there needs to be more.

[
in chat:

Student Rep - Rose Weathers - Harriton - She/her to Everyone (2:11 PM)

Increase topic info slide length and give teams longer to strike
]

Wrap-up

Brier Buchalter

What would everybody think about after the TOC is done having one more get together like this at the end of the year to plan for next year?

How would you all feel about having one more get together towards the end?

Does the community feel like it would be useful to have a coaches and students get-together, say, quarterly, or every three months?

Kate Clarke-Anderson

I think it would be great. I think this is very helpful for coaches and students alike to hear the ideas and opinions and thoughts that each other has, whether they agree or disagree. It's still very good to have this conversation and thank you, Brier, for giving us the opportunity to do so.

[
in chat

Adult Rep - Katie Wilson - Lakeridge (she/her) to Everyone (2:13 PM)

I think you should look into other facilitation / meeting structures if you're going to have more discussion specific meetings

Adult Rep - Sierra Maciorowski - Mountain View to Everyone (2:14 PM)

Feels like it also might be good to give an agenda and ask members to vote on what is most worth discussing, so it's more based on interests!

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