



Statement by the Cross Examination Debate Association Regarding Recent Controversies

The Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) is deeply disappointed by the incident immediately after the quarterfinal debate between Fort Hays State University and Towson University at the 2008 CEDA national tournament. As an academic organization dedicated to promoting critical thinking, the behavior exhibited by members of our organization does not represent CEDA's educational mission. Specifically, the prohibition against these types of actions is codified in CEDA's by-laws:

*Behaviors which belittle, degrade, demean, or otherwise dehumanize others are not in the best interest of the activity because they interfere with the goals of education and personal growth.*

The behavior seen on the video clips of the incident does not accurately reflect the overwhelming majority of our community. The 2008 national tournament alone included approximately one thousand debates and it is unfortunate that the high standards of civil discourse followed by our community were not adhered to in this instance.

Intercollegiate policy debate is a unique activity that allows students from every type of college and university to compete in an intensive academic format. Policy debate teaches students how to engage in essential critical inquiry skills. Competitors spend an entire year researching a single public policy proposition and debate this topic from September until March. Policy debate provides an opportunity for college students to both learn about an array of topics as well as being challenged to defend competing sides of propositions. The instruction of these skills must continue to be offered in a manner that is civil and can improve national discourse.

Since the incident in March, the CEDA Executive Council has been reviewing the behavior of individuals involved. The organization is deeply concerned and disturbed by this behavior and has been actively working with affected parties. Public statements about the disposition of this investigation are not appropriate at this time. As the individuals involved are employees of universities, it is the position of CEDA to honor the personnel policies of the respective institutions. Public statements by university officials at Fort Hays State University and the University of Pittsburgh confirm that they are also reviewing the matter.

As the sponsoring organization for the event where the incident transpired, we ask that all individuals respect the various inquiries under way. CEDA considers this matter to be of the utmost importance and has advised individuals and members of our Executive Council to proceed with extreme care and sensitivity as we move forward on this matter.

The policy of CEDA, like that of many forensics organizations, is to maintain competitions as public events that can be recorded for educational purposes. CEDA was not consulted before any of these videos were posted on public forums. CEDA has also not posted or distributed any videos of or about the incident. We ask that all CEDA participants respect the appropriate local, state and federal laws as well as privacy policies of organizations when posting videos of other individuals.



As these individual inquiries progress, CEDA will also be opening a dialogue among its membership about how to improve curriculum and professional conduct at future competitions. Specifically, the organization has already begun a review of its by-laws to determine the best ways to further promote educationally and professionally appropriate behavior among its members.

### Background on CEDA

Founded in 1971, the Cross-Examination Debate Association (CEDA) is the primary national association sanctioning and promoting intercollegiate academic policy debate. Throughout the school year, CEDA sanctions over 60 tournaments throughout the nation, including an annual National Championship Tournament that brings together over 175 individual debate teams from across the nation to compete for a national team championship.

For further information, contact Darren Elliott, CEDA President (delliott@kckcc.edu), Gordon Stables, CEDA 1st Vice President (stables@usc.edu) or Kathryn Rubino, Chair of the CEDA Public Relations committee (kathrynrubino@gmail.com).

### **Cross Examination Debate Association Executive Officers**

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