

important clothes and group identity are to teenagers, especially inner-city young people. Squad jackets are concrete rewards that can have more immediate meaning than distant promises of college.

In a similar way, promises of tournament victories or trophies are meaningless goals for students in new programs. On the other hand, the promise of a pizza party when the squad wins its first two competitive debates may serve as a more realistic reward and provide stronger motivation.

Working with urban debate programs requires a considerable commitment of time and energy. The funds potentially available from the Open Society Institute have fueled intense interest in the promotion of high school debate programs in urban areas. This is, of course, a desirable result. But before seeking an urban debate grant, it is important for individuals realistically to consider their own professional and personal time commitments. Helping urban (or rural) high school debate programs is personally satisfying, but it cannot be done without some sacrifice of other priorities. Guiding the development of urban debate programs requires more than the organization of a few meetings and the presentation of an occasional lecture. Urban debate programs need mentors who are available to them. This does not mean that college directors should be expected to help in preparing individual debate cases and strategies. But when urban schools first encounter more experienced competitors they may need encouragement and extra assistance, or when urban debaters need to know about permutations or double-turns, further instruction may be requested. In these and similar circumstances college directors can expect to be called upon as continuing sources of information and guidance.

These requests will not always come at convenient times. The time required to plan and prepare for a needed workshop for urban league members may interfere with efforts to coach your own debaters or may force you to give up yet another evening with the family. These comments are not intended to discourage individuals from becoming involved in urban debate programs. They are rather a caution that careful priority setting and time management are required.

IDEAFEST II: THE URBAN DEBATE MOVEMENT COMES OF AGE

Alfred C. Snider

My personal journey with the Urban Debate League concept began not long ago. In June 1997, Emory University hosted what was called the "First Diversity and Retention in Debate Ideafest." The result was that academic debate professionals who had been involved with outreach to new communities and the public came together and shared their experiences and their hopes. Representatives of the Open Society Institute were there taking part and sharing their hopes for both the existing Atlanta Urban Debate League and the recently formed New York Urban Debate League. Others like myself, not already active but interested, were also invited. That event educated me about many things: the results already achieved, the various models offered by others, and the broad interest and agreement around the issue of serving new populations and bringing debate into a new context so that it could evolve into a new and rigorous discourse form suitable for training young people to succeed in the information age.¹

I went straight from the Ideafest to teaching at the Emory National Debate Institute, which was attended by a huge number of Urban Debate League students from Atlanta and New York. I found them to be a very rewarding student population, and I soon learned that the biggest mistake I could make was to underestimate their abilities and set limits for them. I got to know a great number of them as individuals and friends at that time.

In August I drove down to New York City to their first event, a beginning-of-the-year refresher workshop. Melissa Wade was there and brought future national champion debaters with her (Ann Marie Todd, CEDA; Kenya Hansford, ADA). There were exhibition debates and instructional sessions, after which everyone got involved in mini-debates on subjects suggested by the students. Their numbers and vitality were strong. I still had some doubts, but I thought it might work. I was encouraged by the teachers and by the staff working in the program, Beth Breger, Will Baker, and Liz Slagle.

During the year I drove down several times, tabulated most of their eight tournaments, attended the first semester awards banquet, watched everyone including myself growing in

Alfred C. Snider is the Edwin W. Lawrence Professor of Forensics at the University of Vermont.

¹ The initial discussions, transcripts, and documents from that meeting are extremely informative for anyone interested in this subject (see Mitchell).

the process, and eventually saw the year end at the second semester awards banquet. So much had happened, and now it was time for Ideafest II.² Hopefully my incomplete account of this meeting will suffice to give the reader the main substance of the event.³

While the discussion ranged from free-form to highly directed, there seem to have been three clear phases. First, current program administrators discussed their major obstacles and challenges, with prospective grant recipients playing an important part in the discussion. Second, practical solutions to problems and grant requirements were discussed in terms of rationale and implementation. Third, the creation of an Urban Debate League Association to assist and coordinate the various grant recipients was discussed. While a number of problems and difficulties were discussed during the first phase of the meeting, the following issues seemed to be highlighted:

- Recruiting, training, supporting and retaining teacher/coaches;
- Utilizing existing university debate programs, especially students;
- Integrating the program with the community through public events and programs;
- Integrating the program with existing debate leagues;
- Addressing transportation issues and differing urban geography.

During the second phase of the meeting, we turned to the practical issues regarding those questions administrators of Urban Debate Leagues would have to be able to answer

² Ideafest II was attended by: Mike Bacon, *Newburgh Free Academy*; Will Baker, *IMPACT Coalition*; Beth Breger, *Open Society Institute*; James Brey, *Florida State University*; Linda Collier, *University of Missouri at Kansas City*; Carrie Crenshaw, *University of Alabama*; Eric DiMichele, *Regis High School*; Doug Duke, *University of Central Oklahoma*; Skip Eno, *University of Texas, San Antonio*; Brent Farrand, *Newark High School of Science*; Ashley Tharp, *Emory University*; Tom Holihan, *University of Southern California*; Sheryl Kaczmerick, *Newburgh Free Academy*; Sydne Kasle, *Tallahassee Debate Society*; Myron King, *University of Missouri at Kansas City*; Edward Lee, *University of Alabama*; Karla Leeper, *Baylor University*; Leslie Lynn, *Chicago Debate Commission*; Betty Maddox, *Atlanta Public Schools*; Al Madrid, *University of Missouri at St. Louis*; Steve Mancuso, *University of Michigan*; John Meany, *Claremont McKenna College*; Gordon Mitchell, *University of Pittsburgh*; Larry Moss, *Therrell High School*; Thomas Preston, *University of Missouri at St. Louis*; Elizabeth Slagle, *Open Society Institute*; Jim Wade, *Milton High School*; Melissa Wade, *Emory University*; Ede Warner, *University of Louisville*; George Ziegelmueeller, *Wayne State University*, and myself.

³ The entire meeting was videotaped. Copies should be requested from Beth Breger of the Open Society Institute: 400 West 59th Street, New York, NY 10019.

both to present a successful grant application and to successfully implement the program. A list of questions concerning these issues focused on:

- The Local Debate Environment -- existing debate activities and leagues, other forensic activity in the area, high school participation based on Title I status, school selection, potential partner programs for community youth, existence of former debaters in the area to serve as supporters;
- Ability for a University to Outreach -- commitment by a university to offer staff and faculty release time for outreach, existence of a university debate program large enough to offer debaters as mentors and coaches, ways to encourage and sponsor participation by university debaters, existence of a summer institute at the university or in the area to train inner-city students, other programs such as day camps and workshops that the university might offer for urban debate league students;
- Administration of an Urban Debate League -- duties of director and staff, maintaining a database on students, continuing management of the league, transportation issues;
- High School Support for Urban Debate League -- hosting tournaments, role of principals, role of School Board, local government approval, union issues, liability issues, number of teachers from each school to be sponsored, compensation plans for teachers;
- Long Term Funding Strategy -- eventual financial independence for programs, publicity for the program throughout its life to assist fundraising, leveraging school funds from local groups, foundations, corporations and individuals;
- Advisory Boards -- who should be on them, role of such boards.

The discussion was extremely detailed, but seemed to move forward easily because of the nature of the attendees at the meeting. Those already involved in existing programs seemed anxious and able to share ideas, information, and solutions about the subjects we covered. Beth Breger also made it clear that the Open Society Institute wants to be an active partner in helping program administrators solve the problems they face. This assistance is very valuable, as both Beth Breger and Elizabeth Slagle have themselves gained experience as founders of the NY program. Further assistance and coordination can also be provided by an Urban Debate League Association which is presently on the drawing board.

During the third phase of our meeting Will Baker initiated a discussion on the creation of an Urban Debate League Association. Possible UDLA functions include: technical assistance on league administration and implementation, information exchange and database management, college guidance and summer scholarships, fundraising assistance, and national networking activities.

At the conclusion of Ideafest II and in the days following I have been very optimistic about the prospects for this effort. I was impressed at Ideafest II by the large areas of agreement exhibited by a very diverse group of individuals. There seemed to be a conceptual consensus in most areas. I was also pleased that it was a meeting of debate coaches and administrators in which solutions were the major focus. This meeting was very low on pointless complaints, and full of practical ideas for solving real problems. The ingenuity of the group was also quite impressive in their ability to find unique solutions to problems mentioned by various program administrators and planners.

This is a very unique moment in American debate history. We have a great chance to unlock a vast intellectual storehouse of forensic treasures in millions of students and unleash that power on a world crying out for creative answers to our many problems. It is both an opportunity and a responsibility which I hope that we, as a national community, are up to. Based on Ideafest II, I am optimistic.

Work Cited

Mitchell, Gordon, ed. *Proceedings of the First Diversity Recruitment and Retention in Debate Ideafest*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh, 1997.

MEMOIR OF A FORMER URBAN DEBATE LEAGUE PARTICIPANT

Edward Lee

As another year of competitive cross-examination debate ends, I am once again engaged in my seasonal reevaluation of my role in debate and the profound impact it has had on my life. The invitation to participate in Ideafest II and contribute to the forum intensified this reflection. I am left pondering the unique position I occupy as one of the initial graduates of the Atlanta Urban Debate League (UDL) program and as the current Co-director of the Tuscaloosa Debate League (TDL). These experiences have given me the rare opportunity to participate in debate outreach programs as both a participant and a facilitator.

As participants, coaches, and supporters of debate, we constantly speak of its transformative power and innate value. However, the lack of diversity in debate creates a bias in the samples we use to test the reliability of debate as a determiner of academic success and employability. As educators and activists we must transform the image of debate from an extracurricular endeavor for children of affluence to a pedagogical tool desperately needed to prevent an ever-increasing number of academically underprivileged children from wasting away in misery and hopelessness. As a former UDL debater, my personal achievements prove the power of the activity to accomplish this end. What I can contribute to the Ideafest dialogue and the community at large is a former UDL participant's chronicle of debate as an answer to our failing educational paradigm.

Memories of my initial foray into competitive high school debate have dimmed with the passage of time. However, thinking back to six years ago, I am concomitantly bombarded with memories of my disdain for contemporary teaching practices and bell hook's depiction of the "Homeplace" as a site of resistance in her book *Killing Rage*. Ms hooks speaks of the debilitating fear that would overwhelm her as she ventured from her all Black section of a small rural Kentucky town to school in a predominantly white downtown district. She was deeply disturbed by the terrorizing gaze of white men as they interrogated her Blackness. The gaze was powerfully destructive because she could never offer a spoken or unspoken rejoinder, to do so would provoke the racialized sexual violence her grandmother constantly alluded to at the kitchen table. It was not until she reached the edge of her grandmother's

Edward Lee (B.A. University of Alabama) is a graduate student at the University of Alabama and Co-director of the Tuscaloosa Debate League.