experience the importance and gratification of sharing their gifts for the purpose of making a difference in the lives of others.

Third, partnerships like these connect the university to its surrounding community. It fulfills the university's obligation to give back to the community which supports it. It also educates the public about the worth and value of supporting your debate program and informs the collegiate debate program about the needs of the local populace. It helps us to understand how to construct our programs in ways that allow debate to make meaningful contributions to our community.

Most important, however, is that outreach programs help us to see debate not as a privilege but as a gift. Sharing debate as a gift resists privileges born of arbitrary and unfair disparities in opportunity. The beauty of debate is that its quality improves as more people of diverse backgrounds participate, contributing their experience to our shared argument knowledge base. Partnerships that share the gift of debate benefit everyone involved, contribute to the vibrancy of the community, and make the gift even more valuable because it is shared.

THE DETROIT EXPERIENCE

George W. Ziegelmueller

In 1984, the supervisor of Detroit's Gifted and Talented Program asked me to assist him in developing debate programs within Detroit's public high schools. Prior to that time, one or two Detroit public schools had occasionally participated in debate competitions, but there were no continuing, institutionally supported debate programs. With encouragement from the supervisor, a dozen Detroit high school language arts teachers were persuaded to come to the Wayne State University campus to participate in a series of once-a-week debate training seminars. These seminars were two hours in length and were held after regular high school hours. The purpose of the seminars was threefold: (1) to get the teachers interested in and enthusiastic about debate, (2) to instruct them in the fundamentals of debating, and (3) to assist the teachers in organizing debate programs within their own schools. All but two of the teachers lacked any prior training in debate, and none had any substantial knowledge of the activity.

As a result of these seminars, the Detroit Public School Debate League was established to provide a non-threatening environment where Detroit high school students can learn debate while still being motivated by a competitive experience. Each year the League hosts a series of two-round, after school tournaments, and at the end of the debate season a city champion is named based upon the schools' cumulative records in League competition.

Since the founding of the League, substantial numbers of Detroit high school students and teachers have attended the Wayne State University Summer High School Debate Institute. Tuition for this summer program has been provided by Detroit's Gifted and Talented Program, and in some years, by grants from the National Forensic League. Because the Wayne State Summer Program is a non-resident experience, tuition is relatively modest.

Until this year, participation in weekend debate tournaments by Detroit high school students was very limited. Only rarely could money be found within the Detroit school system to fund such tournaments. However, this year, thanks to a grant from the Open Society Institute, all Detroit public schools were given the opportunity to participate in at least three weekend tournaments. While not all the schools took equal advantage of this

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opportunity, those programs that did benefited greatly. For the first time, three Detroit public high schools qualified for the state debate tournament.

I have enjoyed working with the Detroit Debate League and am pleased with all it has accomplished. I have gained great respect for the teachers and students of Detroit, and I have learned much from them and from my experiences with the League. I am aware that each situation is different, but perhaps some observations based upon the Detroit experience may be useful.

If debate is to become a permanent part of educational programs for marginalized students, efforts should focus first and foremost on local school teachers. Teachers are the key to establishing lasting programs. The local high school teacher is the only person who is on the scene every day. He is the person in the best position to build support for debate programs within the school system and the community. His interest and enthusiasm for debate is critical to bringing new students to the activity. Because the teacher is part of the students' immediate economic, social, and cultural environment, the local teacher understands his students' specific needs, interests, strengths and shortcomings better than anyone else. Moreover, the local teacher is the person responsible for organizing classroom experiences, planning tournament schedules, and managing team business. What a student learns at a summer debate camp will quickly fade from memory, if it is not reinforced by teaching and experience when she returns to her local high school.

In-service programs in debate and how to teach it are needed. Guidance in how to organize, manage, and promote the activity also is required. Debate can be intimidating to an inexperienced teacher, so it is important that new debate coaches not be introduced to too much at any one time. Training needs to be provided over a period of years -- not weeks. Teachers who are just beginning programs do not need to know about the theory of counter-plans or critiques. Most important of all, high school debate coaches need to be valued and nurtured by their college peers. Unfortunately, inner-city school administrators often fail to provide positive reinforcement to debate coaches. It is, thus, doubly important that such reinforcement come from within the larger forensic community.

Not all inner-city (or rural) high schools are in equal need of outside assistance. While there are few strong debate programs in any urban area, it is much easier to get programs established in some urban high schools than in others. With increasing emphasis being placed on magnet schools and schools of choice, a new form of educational segregation is occurring in our nation's schools. Two Detroit public high schools are magnet schools that

draw the better, and often more privileged, city students to them. Several other Detroit high schools have been designated for students with special talents such as music, art, and science. While attendance at these advanced high schools benefits select groups of students, the net effect has been to "cream off" many of the best students from neighborhood schools.

As urban debate programs expand, it is important that the less selective neighborhood schools not be ignored. Challenging programs such as debate should surely be a part of magnet school curriculums, and success will be easy to achieve at these schools. But if we are satisfied to limit our outreach only to those who are already being drawn into the mainstream, our efforts will be much less important. The real challenge is to find ways to offer debate to the most disadvantaged and marginalized of our young people.

Eighty percent of the youths at Detroit's Northern High School have some kind of medical, emotional, or social problem that requires special assistance. There is a fifty percent turnover in the student population at Northern each school year, and the neighborhood surrounding the school is one of the poorest in the city. Yet, Detroit Northern is the city debating champion, and it qualified for the state debate tournament. With adequate support and a caring and energetic coach, it is possible for even our most marginalized student populations to benefit from debate training.

Motivating marginal students requires adaptation to their social and cultural values. As university faculty members, we tend to assume that all high school students want to go to college and become big time college debaters. In truth, for many inner-city youth, simply finishing high school is a major accomplishment, and life as a national circuit college debater is so remote that it is difficult for most inner-city youth to relate to it. Of course, high school debating should open marginalized students to a broader world and to new possibilities, but it is also important to reach young people where they are, at the moment. The initial motivating appeal and the reward system of debate must be appropriate to their immediate value systems.

At the 1997 Ideafest hosted by Emory University, a videotape prepared by debaters from Atlanta's Therrell High School vividly illustrated my point. The Therrell debaters in the video proudly displayed team jackets and explained how the jackets had helped the debate squad achieve status and recognition within their high school. The debate team at Detroit Northern High School has also found that jackets enhance squad unity and prestige. The experiences of these debate programs is easily understood when we realize how

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

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