



The Vassar College Invitational Tournament

September 28, 2020

Dear Speech and Debate Coach:

Executive Board 2020-21

Yixiao Cao
President

Adam Chapnik
*Vice President,
Operations*

Anish Kumthekar
*Vice President,
Finance*

The Vassar Debate Association is an undergraduate organization of Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York. Every year, the Vassar Debate Team travels throughout the United States and the world to compete in Parliamentary Debate tournaments.

On behalf of the Vassar College Debate Society, we invite you and your team to the fifth annual Vassar College Invitational Tournament from Saturday, November 7th to Sunday, November 8th, 2020. This online tournament will consist of competition in Varsity and Novice Parliamentary Debate. This tournament does qualify for NPDLC TOC points.

This is Vassar's fifth consecutive year hosting our high school tournament. We hope to replicate the success of previous years by making our tournament as efficient, well-organized, and enjoyable as attendees have come to expect. This year, due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we have decided to move the tournament to the NSDA Campus online platform.

Everett Rutan from the Connecticut Debate Association will direct tab. In addition to running the CDA league, he has run the Parliamentary divisions at Yale, Columbia and University of Pennsylvania and teaches parliamentary debate at Dartmouth's Summer Debate Camp.

This invitation and additional information will be posted on our tournament website, <http://vassarinv.tabroom.com>. If you have additional questions or need assistance, please email us at vassarinv@gmail.com. Please do not hesitate to contact us if your team is experiencing financial difficulties.

Best wishes for the start of the school year – we look forward to seeing you virtually this November!

Sincerely,

Yixiao Cao

The 2020 Vassar Debate Tournament

Note: Please read the entire invitation carefully. We hope it will answer most of your questions.

Registration

Please register for the tournament at www.tabroom.com. You will find the tournament listed on their front page. You can also visit us directly at <http://vassarinv.tabroom.com>. Online instructions are available if you are unfamiliar with the Tabroom system. We can also answer your questions directly and help you get registered.

All teams will be initially waitlisted. We expect to accept at least 4 teams per school, but this will depend on demand. Attendance at online tournaments this year has been running far ahead of attendance at in-person tournaments in past years. We will admit off the waitlist weekly, so if you have additional teams that would like to attend, please keep them on. We expect to limit the entire tournament to between 100 and 200 teams.

All debaters must have tabroom id's linked to their entry. This is the only way they can compete using NSDA Campus.

Divisions

We plan to offer a Varsity and Novice division. Any student of high school age may compete in the Varsity division.

For the purposes of this tournament, a Novice is defined as a speaker in their first year of high school debate who is either a Freshman or a Sophomore.

- Students who have debated in middle school and are in their Freshman year count as Novices.
- Students who debated as Freshmen and are entering their Sophomore year are not Novices and must compete as Varsity speakers.
- Students who did not debate as Freshmen and are entering their Sophomore year may debate as Novices.
- Students who have never debated before but are in their Junior or Senior year are not Novices for this tournament regardless of their inexperience and must debate in the Varsity division.

We feel it is important to give younger debaters experience in national tournaments with the Parliamentary format, and we hope each school that attends will include at least one or two Novice teams in their initial four entries.

Fees

There will be a fee of \$50 per team.

To pay electronically (preferred): <http://paypal.me/vassardebate>. Be sure to include a clear text message indicating which school you are paying for (and, if not paying for the entire school, which entries).

To pay by check, please mail the check to:

*Vassar College Debate Society
c/o Anish Kumthekar
Box 3167
124 Raymond Avenue
Poughkeepsie, NY 12604*

Please make checks payable to: Vassar College Debate Society. Fees should be mailed so they are received prior to the tournament.

Teams in need of fee waivers or financial support should email vassarinv@gmail.com with their queries.

Judging Requirements

Teams should bring one qualified judge for every two teams or part thereof (so three teams would require two judges, as would four teams). **A qualified judge** is an adult or college student who understands high school debate, speaks English, and is experienced in taking a flow and keeping time. A qualified judge knows how to decide the round, to assign ranks and speaker points, and to fill out a ballot including a reasoning for the decision. Judges familiar with Parliamentary debate are preferred, but experience judging other formats of debate is acceptable. We will post a guide for debaters and judges on the website prior to the tournament.

This is a national tournament and we do not have the time or resources to train new judges. It is unfair to expect your students to receive quality judging while not providing the same. Judges with debate experience who are new to the Parliamentary format should consult the guide mentioned above. Teams are responsible for training any judges they bring.

All judges must have tabroom id's linked to their entry. This is the only way they can participate using NSDA Campus. They must also be experienced using tabroom electronic ballots.

Hired Judges

We expect to have some judges available for hire at the rate of \$100 per judge. Their services are available for every two teams, so if you have one team not covered by a judge you may hire one-half of a judge's services for \$50. The number of hired judges is limited. Their services cannot be guaranteed, and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. In allocating hired judges, we will favor teams coming from far away and requiring two nights' stay in Poughkeepsie.

Every school must bring some judges. Tournaments cannot run without a diverse group of judges from many schools. Absent exceptional circumstances, a school should not assume it can satisfy its judging burden with hires. As we are online, we suggest schools reach out to their debate alums in college.

Supervision

High school students at online tournaments must still be under the supervision of a coach or other adult authorized by their school. If a team or debater does not show up in an online room we do not have a means of contacting them. We expect the coach/adult supervisor to respond to our inquiries and to be able to contact the student to help us remedy the situation.

Safety

We will provide contact information for students, judges and coaches in case of technical or other problems.

The policy of the Vassar Invitational concerning consumption of alcoholic beverages by minors, illegal use of controlled substances, vandalism, and destructive, and/or other illegal or disorderly behavior is: (1) to disqualify involved contestants from further competition; (2) to communicate the offending incident to the contestant's on-site guardians and/or parents; (3) to require financial reimbursement for all damages or liabilities caused directly or indirectly by the incident; and (4) to notify the local legal authorities. The precise remedy or remedies selected will remain at the discretion of the tournament staff.

The Vassar Collegiate Invitational staff reserve the right to refuse entry to the tournament to anyone—be they a competitor, a judge, or an observer—at their sole discretion.

Waiver Form

We have two waiver forms, one to be filled out by the school regarding supervision, the other to be filled out by the parent or guardian of each student. These forms are posted as pdf files on the main tournament page. Each school should collect the completed forms and submit them through our online portal:

<https://forms.gle/QWwGGpZYrQnJByxC7>

Please try to collect all the forms in a single file and send them in at once to make our record keeping easier.

Parliamentary Debate Format

We will follow the collegiate APDA style with the 7-8-8-8-4-5 format. We will provide a more detailed style guide for debaters and judges on the tournament web site. For a more detailed explanation of the format please see the APDA web site: <http://apda.online/>. Note that the APDA website has a “Novice Mentor” section with a number of useful articles on various aspects of Parliamentary debate that we highly recommend.

We will release one or more straight-link motions for each round, and debaters will have 15 minutes before the start of debate to prepare cases. For some rounds teams may be assigned sides; for others the motion and sides will be determined by a coin toss.

The debate format is extemporaneous. Debaters are not permitted to use briefs, prepared cases, research material, or the internet during their preparation period or during the debate. They may use laptops or tablet computers to take notes during preparation, or during the round, or to speak from the podium, but they may not use research materials stored on said devices, or reference online sources. They may use electronic devices to keep time.

“Extemporaneous” does not mean that debaters cannot cite facts or references during the debate, only (following APDA guidelines) that these facts be generally well-known or fully explained in the speech to both the other team and the judge so that they can be critically evaluated. The posted style guide and the APDA website have a more detailed discussion of the use of evidence.

Schedule

The tournament will run for two days. Due to limits on campus availability, we have to end a bit earlier than usual on Saturday, so we can only run 4 rounds that day. We hope to have enough teams to have five preliminary rounds of single-flight debate with a break to quarter-finals in the Varsity Division and semi-finals in Novice. However, we understand that some teams may not want stay over to Sunday if they do not break.

We will poll the coaches as to their preference to have a 5th full round on Sunday or a break to Octo-finals in Varsity. The preliminary schedule is as follows:

Time	Activity
Saturday, November 2nd	
9:30AM	General assembly opens for registration
10-10:30AM	General assembly and equity briefing
10:30-12:00PM	Round 1
12:00-2:00PM	Round 2
2:00-4:00PM	Round 3
4:00-6:00PM	Round 4
6:00-8:00PM	Round 5
8:00PM	Speaker awards
Sunday, November 3rd	

Other than the general starting time of 10AM, the schedule is likely to change based on what we see in the experience of other tournaments.

We expect to break to at least octo-finals in Varsity and quarter-finals in Novice, but this may be adjusted based on the size of the field.

9:30AM	General assembly opens for registration
10:00-11:30AM	Varsity Octo-finals
11:30-1:00PM	Varsity Quarter-finals and Novice Quarter-finals
1:00-1:30PM	Break
1:30-3:00PM	Semi-finals
3:00-4:30PM	Finals
4:30PM	Closing