

Debate Team wins IPDA national community college championship

BAYTOWN, TX — In a feat previously unseen in collegiate debate, the Mendoza Debate Society at Lee College has earned its third consecutive International Public Debate Association (IPDA) National Community College Debate Championship – and Director of Forensics Joe Ganakos has been named the 2016 IPDA Bennett Strange Coach of the Year.

The honors were announced at the 2016 IPDA National Championship Tournament and Convention hosted March 31-April 3 on the Lee College campus. Nearly 500 competitors participated.

Lee College debaters were the IPDA National Championship Tournament Community College Champions – delivering the best performance in the tournament's 19-year history – and the Season Long Community College Champions, capping off a standout regular season in which the team amassed more than 150 awards and several members reached national prominence for their individual accomplishments.

The duo of captains Kyle Diamond and Rigo Ruiz won the 2015-16 IPDA Team Division National Championship, setting an all-time record for points earned in team debate. When combined with the scores earned by the third-place pair of Emmanuel Perez and Josh Lyrock, Lee College debaters also set an all-time points record en route to winning the IPDA Team Squad National Championship. Jerry McCauley was named 2015-16 IPDA Junior Varsity National Champion, and Diamond finished the season as the 2015-16 Varsity Division National Runner-Up and National Championship Tournament Varsity Finalist.

Overall, the Mendoza Debate Society at Lee College was the top-ranked debate program in Texas for the 2015-16 IPDA season – besting opponents from Southern Methodist University, Stephen F. Austin State University, Prairie View A&M University, East Texas Baptist University, College of the Mainland, San Jacinto College and Tarrant County Community College, among others. The team was also competitive against some of the top universities in the nation, finishing fifth in the IPDA Founders' Cup race that reflects combined success in the Novice, Junior Varsity, Varsity and Professional divisions.

Diamond and Ruiz will next defend the team's 2015 Madison Cup victory April 18 at the 2016 James Madison Commemorative Debate & Citizens Forum in Virginia. The competition field will include 36 teams from prestigious debate programs like Stanford University, Cornell University and Emory University.