

Debate Team Brings Home Four Championships

The Mendoza Debate Society at Lee College struck gold in The Gem State by winning four IPDA National Championships at the 2023 IPDA National Championship Tournament & Convention hosted by Boise State University on March 23-26, 2023. Lee College finished as both the 2022-2023 IPDA Season Long Community College Champions and the 2023 IPDA National Championship Tournament Community College Champions. Lee College was also named the 2023 IPDA National Championship Tournament Team Debate Community College Champions. Team co-captain Priscilla Guerra, IMPACT Early College High School student, was recognized as the 2023 IPDA National Championship Tournament Junior Varsity Division Champion.

At the 2023 IPDA National Championship Tournament, Lee College students brought home major awards as individuals as well. Jerry McCauley was a Professional Division Semi-Finalist and was the 5th Ranked Professional Debate Speaker at the tournament. Team Co-Captain Diego Moreno was a Junior Varsity Division Double Octofinalist, while novice debaters Emma Jaramillo, Elias Perry and Carlos Reyes were all Novice Double Octofinalist. Moreno, Jaramillo, Perry and Reyes are all IMPACT ECHS students.

“When some of my opponents and judges from different universities were coming up to me to congratulate me, they were surprised to find out that I was a high school student,” said Guerra. “But anyone who adopted my mindset could have done what I did with the right training and motivation, probably even better than me. The goal was never to win a national championship, it was always for my friends and for the team.”

Guerra, along with Co-Captain Rebecca Currie were the cornerstone of Lee College’s TIPDA program and were instrumental in winning that national title.

For the season, the Mendoza Debate Society at Lee College finished as the 8th team in the nation in the 2022/2023 IPDA Founders’ Cup overall standings, in 6th Place in the 2022/2023 IPDA Novice Squad standings, and in 6th Place in the 2022/2023 IPDA Junior Varsity standings. Individually, Reyes was the 3rd ranked 2022/2023 IPDA Novice Debater in the nation. Team Co-Captains Currie and Guerra finished in 11th Place and 13th Place respectively in the Junior Varsity Division.

Lee College’s tradition of debate excellence was in full display in Boise, ID, just as it was in their 2015 showing in Boise; this year’s team, despite being the youngest team in the nation, pulled off an impressive 7th Place overall finish against a field of dozens of nationally lauded programs.

This year’s field of teams included Tournament Champion Union University (TN), Tournament Runner-Up Abilene Christian University (TX), Southern Methodist University (TX), the University of Florida (FL), the University of Tennessee (TN), University of Arkansas (AR), Mississippi State University (MS), University of Montana (MT), Louisiana Tech University (LA), San Diego State University (CA) and host Boise State University (ID).

The members of the 2023 National Championship Team included Jovani Arellano, Co-Captain Rebecca Currie, Rufina Gonzalez, Caris Gray, Co-Captain Priscilla Guerra, Emma Jaramillo, Vanessa Jones, Co-Captain Diego Moreno, Jerry McCauley, Nathan Mustapha, Elias Perry, Dax Ramgoolam, and Carlos Reyes. They were accompanied

by judges Riyanna Kennedy, Adam Naiser, and Kimberly Truong. Lee College Debate alumni Cody Bijou (University of Arkansas at Monticello), Reagan Bijou (University of Arkansas at Monticello), Linley Brown (University of Texas), and Lacey Gulley (Sam Houston State University) were also in attendance, along with Lee College Debate Assistant Coach Rigoberto Ruiz and Lee College administrator Dr. Marissa Moreno.

Lee College Debate will return to competition in April as an invitee in the prestigious James Madison Cup in Harrisonburg, VA where they will compete head-to-head against a select field of 18 top colleges and universities from across the nation including Cornell University, the University of Texas, George Washington University and Liberty University.

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Top photo:

Back, from left: Dax Ramgoolam, Linley Brown, Jovani Arellano, Rebecca Currie, Riyanna Kennedy, Diego Moreno, Nathan Mustapha, and Carlos Reyes. Front: Emma Jaramillo, Rufina Gonzalez, Caris Gray, Priscilla Guerra, Kimberly Truong, Elias Perry, Adam Naiser, Lacey Gulley, and Jerry McCauley.