"We Shall Return."

UCSD Speech & Debate Team Returns to Concordia University; seizes Championship

A year ago, the results of Concordia University's tournament were reported to you via an article entitled, "Streak Comes to an End". The story depicted your UCSD Speech & Debate Team's Second Place finish, ending its tournament championship winning streak of five consecutive tournaments. Consoling team members in the parking lot after last year's Awards Ceremony, Coach Robert Campbell vowed, in the spirit of General Douglas MacArthur, "We shall return." And, indeed, this last weekend, the Team returned…in force and on a mission!

In the first major tournament of 2024, the UCSD Speech & Debate Team won the Tournament Championship Trophy at the Janesse Davidson Memorial Tournament at Concordia University, January 26-28. UCSD buried the competition with *272 Sweepstakes points*, **more than double** the total points achieved by UCSD's "archrival" and last year's Tournament Championship team, Point Loma Nazarene University (PLNU, *118 points*).

UCSD's dominance at this tournament was crystal clear as the Team's total Tournament Championship Points exceeded the sum of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Place teams combined! (PLNU, 118; University of Utah, 98; University of California Berkeley, 54).

Winning 14 of the previous 16 major, regional tournaments attended, UCSD's 88% Tournament Championship win percentage is very likely another historic record in the annals of the endeavor. There is no record of any middle school, high school, community college, nor university achieving such dominance in a region in interscholastic speech and debate.

In NPDA debate (two vs. two), the Team's performance was the best of the season, as four of our eight teams reached the elimination rounds. **UCSD's Novice Division Teams "closed out" the Tournament.** (A "closeout" occurs when the final two teams remaining are from the same school.)

UCSD's Lily Zhao and Dominic Felton captured **First Place**, while Emily Bianchi and Marielle Lazaro finished closely in **Second Place**.

In the Open (most senior) Division, via a spectacular run, Odessa Castillo and Sibi Sivaram rose to what would become the final NPDA round of the tournament and fell to UC Berkeley's team, who was *last year's national NPDA champions*. Lily Zhao was the tournament's **Third Place** Speaker in NPDA, while teammate Dominic Felton placed **Fourth**. UCSD's Felip Gerdes and Jared Hoffart reached the NPDA **Octofinals**.

In IPDA debate (one vs. one), 17 UCSD debaters reached the elimination rounds. The table below depicts the results.

Division	Team Member	Bronze (3rd Place)	Silver (2nd Place)	Gold (1st Place)
Open	Felip Gerdes	✓		
Open	Muni Ibrahim	✓		
Open	Dasha Okolysheva	✓		
Open	Carter Castillo	✓		
Open	Toby Ngo	✓		
Open	Dayyan Rizvi	✓		
Open	Julian Mackenzie		✓	
Open	Leslie Cheng		✓	
Open	Odessa Castillo			✓
Open	Srujam Dave			✓
Junior	Nika Radgoudarzi		✓	
Novice	Thomas Zhang	✓		
Novice	Brianna Newton	✓		
Novice	Natalia Montero	✓		
Novice	Karam Sodhi	✓		
Novice	Matthew Charry		✓	
Novice	Asa Quadri			✓

The Tournament Championship was seized, going away from the competition, by Sunday's stellar performance in Speech Events. UCSD sent 30 Team Members (three in two events!) to the elimination rounds. The table below depicts the results.

Event	Division	Team Member	Award
Extemporaneous	Open	Jared Hoffart	6th Place
Extemporaneous	Open	Lucas Howard-Ron	Semi-finalist
Extemporaneous	Junior	Felip Gerdes	1st Place
Extemporaneous	Junior	Thomas Zhang	2nd Place
Extemporaneous	Junior	Lillian Theis	3rd Place
Extemporaneous	Junior	Carter Castillo	5th Place
Extemporaneous	Novice	Natalie Ambler	1st Place
Extemporaneous	Novice	Srujam Dave	3rd Place
Extemporaneous	Novice	Natalia Montero	4th Place
Extemporaneous	Novice	Darief Maes	7th Place
Extemporaneous	Novice	Kyle Matsuno	9th Place
Extemporaneous	Novice	Toby Ngo	10th Place
Extemporaneous	Novice	Karam Sodhi	11th Place
Impromptu	Junior	Thomas Zhang	3rd Place

Impromptu	Junior	Eugene Kong	4th Place
Impromptu	Junior	Brianna Newton	5th Place
Impromptu	Novice	David Zheng	1st Place
Impromptu	Novice	Paulina Andreani	3rd Place
Impromptu	Novice	Saria Markes	4th Place
Impromptu	Novice	Darief Maes	5th Place
Impromptu	Novice	Marielle Lazaro	6th Place
Impromptu	Novice	Claire Dickens	9th Place
Impromptu	Novice	Natalia Montero	11th Place
Impromptu	Novice	Raquel Ruiz	13th Place
Persuasive	Open	Marina Hu	3rd Place
Persuasive	Novice	Diego Dono	4th Place
After Dinner Speech	Novice	Emily Biachi	Finalist
After Dinner Speech	Open	Kellen Foster	3rd Place
Poetry	Novice	Cindy Chanay	Finalist
Poetry	Novice	Keira McIlvenna-Davis	Finalist
Informative	Novice	Kevin Colorado	3rd Place

Head Coach Robert Campbell summarized the weekend, "I want to place the achievements during this incredible weekend into perspective.

In the Fall Quarter of 2018, we attended our first tournament and joyously celebrated a Second Place finish. Five years later, at this Concordia University tournament, I had to console the Team as it accepted its Second Place finish behind PLNU's Championship. This juxtaposition illustrates how UCSD's Speech & Debate Team has grown. The Team now attends major regional tournaments *expecting* to win the Championship.

At this year's tournament, UCSD took on 30 schools, including some of the best debate teams in the nation from UC Berkeley, University of Texas at Tyler, TX, and Willam Jewell College from Liberty, Missouri. Additionally, our Team surpassed the efforts of the University of Utah, the University of Northern Iowa, UNLV, Mercer University from Macon, Georgia, San Diego State, and a host of California colleges and universities.

A year ago, our Team made a promise to work, grow, and return to the Janesse Davidson Memorial Tournament at Concordia University and win the tournament. This mission was achieved in spectacular fashion, eclipsing the competition.

I am so very proud of what one could claim to be the greatest Speech and Debate Team in the nation."

The UCSD Speech & Debate Team is a program sponsored by UCSD's Communication Department and the School of Social Sciences.