Speech and Debate Team achieves 2nd at largest tourney in the Northwest

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Utah State University’s Speech and Debate Team place high in the season’s largest competition in the Northwest held in November at Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon. Coach Chantelle Gossner is second from right.

Utah State University’s Speech and Debate Team achieved a significant victory in the season’s largest such competition in the Northwest region, earning an overall placement of second.

In November, the Speech and Debate Team competed in the Division II team sweepstakes at Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon. It was the second conference-designated tournament of the season.

Coach Chantelle Gossner said this 2019-2020 team, with only 10 competitors, is among the smallest teams USU has fielded in recent years.

“We are competing with teams that, in most cases, are double our size or more,” she said. “For such a small team to achieve this high mark demonstrates that each student is truly a star.”

Junior Bryn Voigt, a major in Political Science, received the Singletary Outstanding Debater award, which Gossner is an exciting and unique recognition given to only one student across all divisions and formats of debate at the tournament.

“With an estimated total of over 200 debaters competing, beating them all out to attain an award like this is a real credit to the Bryn,” Gossner said. The coach herself understands the satisfaction in the award because she has earned the award twice while a USU student.

USU’s team members illustrated their skill in a diverse array of speech events.

Winners include:

- **Open division informative speaking**: Brock Redman, a junior in biochemistry, earned 3rd place, and senior Communications and Print Journalism major Naomi Ward earned 7th place. Ward also represented USU as the champion in open division persuasive speaking.
- **Junior division program oral interpretation**: Amrutha Obulasetty, a freshman studying Psychology and English, received 2nd place.
- **Novice division informative speaking**: Voigt received 2nd, with freshman Exploratory major Bryant Sanders coming in 6th.

Voigt also achieved 4th place in open division communication analysis and was awarded for being the top junior division student in an open division event.

“The students have worked hard to memorize their speeches and are now really starting to gel with their content, which allows them to focus on fine-tuning and evoking emotion,” said Gossner. Because team members work on a single presentation throughout the year, she said, “this is the time of year when their performances become incredibly compelling.”

The Aggies also made their mark in the style of debate established by the International Public Debate Association. Obulasetty received 8th place in novice speaker awards, which are given for quality of presentation and content. In junior division speaker awards, senior Communication Studies major Rachael Teare earned 2nd place, senior Journalism student Ammon Teare received 3rd, Voigt placed 5th, and Sanders received 9th.

Sanders competed all the way through finals in the single-elimination round, finishing the tournament as the 2nd-place debater in novice division.
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