

with other students and adult sponsors.

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

There are also practical advantages to participation in high school debate. Numerous organizations sponsoring debate tournaments offer scholarships to outstanding participants. The National Forensic League, in partnership with several sponsors including the Lincoln Financial Group, provides over \$150,000 each year in scholarships to top competitors at the national tournament. Among state associations offering scholarships for debaters, the University Interscholastic League (UIL) in Texas leads the way. Students who qualify for elimination rounds at the UIL state tournament are eligible for college scholarships provided through the Texas Interscholastic League Foundation (TILF), which amounted to \$1.18 million in 2007-2008.

Hundreds of colleges and universities provide debate scholarships. Baylor University (where I am a professor of communication studies) currently offers eight full tuition scholarships to outstanding high school debaters who are interested in participating in intercollegiate debate competition.

WHAT IS THE COST?

This first chapter has been about the benefits of competitive debate. Yet with all benefits, there are also costs. What are the costs of involvement in competitive debate?

Debate requires a commitment of time and energy. Successful debaters spend hours of preparation for each hour of actual competition. This preparation involves research, organization, and rehearsal.

Debate also requires a willingness to risk embarrassment. There will be times when a superior opponent demonstrates the inadequacies of your arguments. Losing is never pleasant, but it is educational. The best debaters learn as much from the rounds they lose as the ones they win.

Debate requires a commitment of resources. Tournament participation involves the payment of entry fees and travel expenses. Some progressive-thinking school districts pay for all these expenses because they recognize the educational benefits of competitive debate. In most cases, however, tournament expenses are funded by parental contributions and/or fundraising campaigns.

FURTHER READING