

URBAN DEBATE LEAGUE

NEW HAVEN

UDL Annual Newsletter – Volume 2 – May 2015
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UDL by the Numbers

15: Number of schools with a UDL program, including five new schools.

\$1,250: Amount of scholarship money earned at UDL tournaments by top debaters.

6: tournaments hosted by UDL this school year.

23: Teams attending the November 2014 tournament, UDL's largest yet.

Dear UDL debaters, alumni, coaches, parents and friends,

Looking back at 2014-2015, it's difficult to pick a single moment or event as a favorite highlight. At the Citywide Debate Tournament in December, debaters shared the stage with Mayor Toni Harp and Superintendent Garth Harries. UDL teams did well at the highly competitive Liberty Bell Classic in Pennsylvania. And there is much to celebrate beyond competitive success: a record-breaking 23 teams competed at the November tournament and dozens of parents and friends attended the exhibition round and awards ceremony at April's New Haven District Championship. At practice and in competition, there were so many reminders that debate can not only develop new skills and expose participants to new ideas, but also build community.

UDL hosted six tournaments this year, including two special semester-concluding events. Thanks to the generosity and support of Jason Bartlett, New Haven Youth Services Director, and Rachel Heerema, executive director of the Citywide Youth Coalition, December's tournament offered top debaters \$1,000 in scholarship money. The final round was adjudicated by Harp and Harries, who said he doubted he would have been able to hold his own against Sound School seniors Zariah Altman, Allie Corona and Denzel Walker and West Haven senior Tatiana Gay. Debating the merits of the restorative justice model in New Haven public schools, the team of Altman and Gay, arguing in favor of adopting the model, won the round. At the second annual New Haven District Championship in April, 15 teams competed in four

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Highlights of the Year

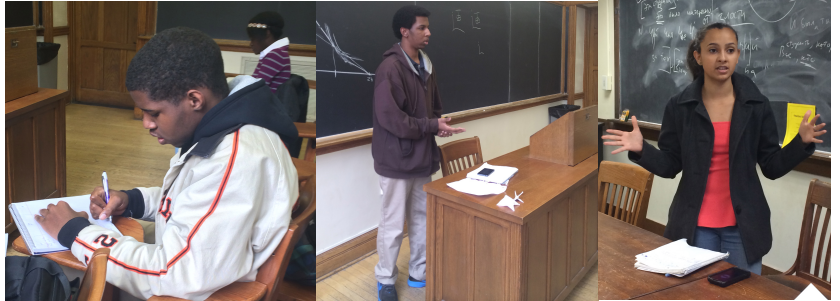
Summer: 60 students from New Haven and all over Connecticut attend UDL's four-day summer camp.

Fall: UDL expands for the first time to Bridgeport, with a successful team at Harding HS, and into New Haven Middle Schools with a program at Betsy Ross MS. New programs also begin at Hyde and Polly McCabe high schools. Tournament attendance rises steadily throughout the semester.

December: UDL hosts the Citywide Debate Championship, featuring a final round adjudicated by Mayor Toni Harp, Superintendent Garth Harries and peer leader Ahmed Hardy, a sophomore at New Horizons. Finalists are awarded \$1,000 in scholarship prize money.

February: 10 UDL students attend the Liberty Bell Classic at the University of Pennsylvania. Two teams advance to octofinals. Later in the month, Wilton HS debaters attend a UDL tournament to build relationships between UDL and Connecticut Debate Association debaters.

April: Debaters compete at the final tournament of the school year, featuring four preliminary rounds and a final exhibition attended by family and friends. Thanks to an anonymous donor, top debaters are awarded \$250.



preliminary rounds-- a first for a UDL tournament. In the exhibition round, Altman and Co-op senior Xavier Sottile debated Corona and Walker on mandating vaccinations for school children even in cases of philosophical or religious objections. Altman and Sottile won the round and \$100 each. The top novice speaker, West Haven's Annasse Rajeh, competing at his first UDL tournament ever, also won \$50. The anonymous donor who generously provided the funding for the cash prizes has pledged to make an annual gift to UDL, so we anticipate that the annual District Championship will continue to grow and become more competitive.

Fourteen UDL students represented New Haven at the Liberty Bell Classic at UPenn, a national-circuit tournament in February, and two of our seven teams advanced to octofinals: Altman and Sottile and Allison Lewis and Pearl Rourke of Hills Academy. UDL was one of only two debate programs at the tournament (with a field of more than 50 teams) to break more than one team to outrounds. Debaters also enjoyed touring Philadelphia to visit the Liberty Bell and eat pizza. Thank you to alumna Tanvi Patel for hosting us!

As coaches settle into summer vacation and debaters wrap up their school year, we're looking forward to our annual summer camp. It has been expanded from four days to an entire week, August 24th to 28th. Students will immerse themselves in practice rounds, drills, games and discussion. The application is available on our website.

We are always looking for new ways to improve and expand our service to the UDL community. If you have any ideas or suggestions on ways through which we can continue to do so, please feel free to let us know by emailing us at newhavenudl@gmail.com with the subject "UDL suggestion."

Thank you for your support for UDL! We are truly thankful, and so grateful to be a part of a wonderful debate community.

-Morgan Smiley & Isabelle Taft, Co-Presidents

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Selected profiles of UDL's graduating seniors



ZARIAH ALTMAN I have been a student at The Sound School for four years and have competitively participated in UDL for my high school experience as well. Debate has been the only activity that I have stuck with since freshman year that I have always loved. I love participating in the tournaments and meeting the people. The four coaches that I have had have been great! So major thanks to EB, Noah, and Victorio for being funny, and fantastic. I want to give a special thanks to Becca Steinberg, my coach of four years that sat with me to write my college essays and buys me Indian food from time to time. Debate, and UDL in particular, has allowed me to develop passions and meet awesome people. I can honestly say that I wouldn't be the same person that I am today! I will attend Vassar and study biology and Italian as a pre-med student.



ALLIE CORONA I entered Sound School as a junior, greatly interested in biology and medicine. Debate quickly became more than a hobby. It was so exciting to see people (e.g. Becca) that were so astounding. I was glad to have debate as an outlet to express concern and desire to change the status quo in many of the situations deforming the world. I am incredibly grateful to join Yale in the fall with a career of medicine in mind. I will continue to see the world in the eyes of a critical thinking person and I have debate, my partner—Denzel Walker—and my coaches to thank for that.

I like the community that UDL is built on. At first glance, one would probably think that we're a bunch of kids who argue together and then go our separate ways. But it's not like that all. We actually enjoy each other. Cheer each other even when we're opponents. I find that kind of sportsmanship to be pretty cool and possibly unique to UDL.

-Destiny Colon, High School in the Community Class of 2017, two-year debate team member

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SARAH FLYNN My name is Sarah Flynn and I am a senior at West Haven High School. My friend noticed that I had a knack for debating and invited me to join the team. A year later, I had progressed so much that I had the honor of being one of three captains for my team! Debate has strengthened my abilities to think on my feet and convey arguments in an elegant manner.



TATIANA ASHANTI GAY joined West Haven's debate team two years ago. She has consistently placed in the top nine speakers at UDL tournaments all year. In the fall, she plans to attend the University of New Haven for forensic science in the #1 forensic science program in the country. She enjoys fashion design and is currently finishing up making her senior prom dress. Tatiana's other hobbies/interests include: spoken word, anatomy & physiology, criminal justice, and shopping. Her favorite debate accomplishments include winning 1st Place at the New Haven Debate with Zariah Altman in December 2014 & competing at the Liberty Bell Classic Invitational at UPenn.



JAMIE KELLEY is a tri-captain of her high school's team. As well as debate Jamie is also involved in a wide variety of extracurricular activities such as her school's Mock Trial team, her school's newspaper as Head Editor, the Academic Integrity Committee, National Honor Society, the Washington Elementary School Mentors/Tutors, WHH's Theatre Workshop, and the all girls elite choir, Camerata. In her free time she volunteers at a local soup kitchen and works on her town's Fireworks Committee. Jamie will attend Southern Connecticut State University, where she will study Political Science with an English minor. She is considering doubling her Political Science major with Philosophy and embarking on a Pre-Law Track to one day achieve her dream job as an attorney.

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DENZEL WALKER is a senior at the Sound School. He's been publicly speaking for four years on political issues throughout New Haven, and debating for two years. He and his partner, Alejandra Corona, have competed in UPenn Liberty Bell Classic, Yale Osterweis, and multiple UDL tournaments. Winning multiple awards throughout the competitions has inspired him to help leave a legacy at the Sound School and encourage inner city youth to join debate teams where they will develop multiple skills like critical thinking and public speaking. Not ending his debate career in high school, Denzel will be attending George Washington University joining their debate team. There he will be studying biological anthropology.



XAVIER SOTTILE is a graduating senior at Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School, where he concentrated in creative writing. He has been on the debate team since his freshman year, which he primarily joined because his mother said it looked good on college applications. Other than debating, Xavier likes to practice martial arts, write scripts that make his friends laugh, watch HBO's hit series Game of Thrones, and write satirical plays about right-wing political pundits. He's very excited to attend Yale University in the fall.

Congratulations and
good luck to all of UDL's
graduating seniors!

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To the Friends of UDL:

New Haven UDL has grown immensely in these past couple of years. We are able to reach out to more schools and more students than ever before. But we could never have done it without the un-yielding generosity and support of parents, teachers, advisers, and donors. UDL receives partial funding from Dwight Hall, Yale's umbrella group for service organizations. However, these funds do not cover all of our expenses, which include transportation, lodging and food for students competing at regional tournaments, awards for UDL tournament winners, and other special programs.



If UDL is to continue to grow, we need your help! Please consider supporting UDL with a donation. You can reach us by email or find us on our website: udl.sites.yale.edu.

The mission of UDL—to give New Haven students the chance to think analytically and create arguments in a non-classroom setting—remains as important as ever.

Best,

Eric Wang

Director of Development, UDL

