



Impact Report

Forensics Program 2020-2021

Impact Report

The annual Competitive Communications Impact Report marks the end of another season in which we dove into unknown, uncharted, and uncomfortable territory as we navigated the pandemic. We continued to rely on each other through a virtual medium, and Zoom connections fueled efforts to stay invested in our community. Our Competitive Communications plan for this year focused on communicating real issues in virtual spaces. Our on-campus programming focused on education around critically conscious dialogue, and virtually-engaged community building.

Our students' commitment remains unmatched, showing strength of character, steady work ethic, and civic responsibility. They banded together during the tense election cycle, hosted online forums, debated virtually, delivered dynamic speeches, sliced through dubious cross-examinations, and performed with ease without the energy of a live audience throughout the entire academic year.

The 2020-21 season was unprecedented as we tackled the challenge of competition during a global pandemic. Adapting from in-person competition to online weekend tournaments navigating unfamiliar competition platforms, students found solace in competing in virtual classroom spaces and reaped success for their sustained efforts. Students and coaches alike found new ways of building community and were grateful technology provided the means for competition to continue through the pandemic.

In light of a tense political year, team leaders from each section of Competitive Communications designed a new group, **Middle Ground**, a student-designed cohort composed of members of the existing competitive teams: **Emma Gorsuch '22**, **Deksyos Damtew '22**, **James Hanafee '22**, **Stephen Sigman '22**, and **Teddy Sky-Weiss '22**.

The purpose of Middle Ground is to engage the student body and broader Colorado Springs community in civic discourse on issues that can be divisive. The students sought to build alliances with their peers outside of competition through designing critical discourse workshops, post-debate forums, and online voter resources to support students during the presidential election season. Working closely with the organization "CC Votes", students worked to de-mystify and eliminate the intimidation of organized debate.

SPEECH AND DEBATE

Our speech and debate students competed in eight (!) tournaments virtually and most recently participated in our District Qualifier and American Forensics Association's National Tournament over Blocks 6 and 7.

TOURNAMENT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Pacific Championship PSCFA** 2nd Place Overall Sweepstakes
- **Florida Marks Invitational** 2nd Place Overall Sweepstakes
- **Aztec Invitational** 1st Place Individual Sweepstakes
- **Trapper Rendezvous** 3rd Place Overall Sweepstakes
- **International Forensics Tournament** 2nd Place Overall IPDA Debate

Deksyos Damtew '22 earned the Paul Gaskey Memorial Scholarship for highest competitive achievement at the tournament.

PARTICIPANTS

- **Stephen Sigman '22**
- **Alanna Jackson '23**
- **Lucaiah Smith-Miodownik '23**
- **Jordan Bates '24**
- **Deksyos Damtew '22**
- **Colleen Campbell '23**
- **Star Goudriaan '24**



Deksyos Damtew



Our students competed in Districts and three students broke and qualified to participate in the national tournament, AFA-NST, competing against 74 other colleges: **Stephen Sigman '22**, **Deksyos Damtew '22**, and **Alanna Jackson '23**. Damtew broke to quarter-finals in Extemporaneous Speaking and is ranked the 16th speaker in EXT in the country.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Deksyos Damtew '22, led an equitably designed speech and debate camp for high school students as they prepared to compete in the National Speech and Debate Association's annual tournament in June. This is the second year of the camp, and Damtew, along with fellow speech and debate students: **Stephen Sigman '22**, **Alanna Jackson '23**, **Colleen Campbell '23**, **Anusha Vajrала '23**, **Ben Greenly '23**, **Lucaiah Smith-Miodownik '23**, **Star Goudriaan '24**, and **Jordan Bates '24**, with speech and debate alumnus **Russell Skorina '19**, will be volunteer coaches and mentors. The camp offered limited preparation event training, speech editing, performance coaching, and team-building exercises to students across the country at no cost to participants.

Damtew recalls: "Following the events of this summer and the momentum created by BLM [Black Lives Matter], marginalized voices have been elevated onto the national stage. However, this empowerment far too often dies out once anger and frustration subside. This year, the camp will focus on developing students' communication skills, not just within speech and debate, but outside of it as well. Advocacy begins with establishing your ethos, or credibility, with your audience. Speech and debate can foster

a commitment to community engagement. I hope to work with students to collaborate on ways to improve all of our communities through speech and debate."

MODEL UNITED NATIONS

The Model United Nations Club, also directed by Sarah Hinkle, emphasizes understanding in international security, health policy, environmental protection, human rights, and humanitarian aid by researching countries' positions and representing them at collegiate conferences. During a conference, students from different countries cooperate with each other to build concrete proposals, negotiate to reach consensus, and eventually pass resolutions that represent the results of an intercultural creative process addressed to face our world's most pressing troubles. Members of the club also strive to promote global awareness on campus.

The MUN team had a productive year, starting with a successful remote recruitment. The team welcomed five new members and saw the return of a strong upperclassmen student core. They hosted weekly virtual meetings (featuring discussions on current world crises and debate on the best means to address them), two campus-wide trivia nights covering a variety of political, historical, and United Nations-related topics, and a collaborative event with CC's John Quincy Adams Society.

The team capped off the year by participating in a four-way virtual scrimmage with the Air Force Academy, Colorado State University Fort Collins, and the University of Denver. This was the first Model UN conference to bring these four teams together and the second featuring CC and the Air Force, who previously scrimmaged in 2020. The event featured a unique 'joint crisis committee' where each school's team represented a different political actor — the U.S., Syria, ISIS, and the Kurds — in the midst of the Syrian Civil War in 2013.

Every student represented a member of their country's cabinet and employed their individual strengths to implement their character's agenda. The simulation was highly integrated and immersive in that each actor's decisions had real-time consequences that affected each of the other participants. Seven CC students, representing the Kurds, participated in the scrimmage, with five serving as delegates and two administering the scrimmage. Due to the fast-paced nature of the event, students were challenged to exercise quick, creative decision-making, effective diplomacy, and tactical strategy. The teams hope to make this event an annual tradition for years to come.

PARTICIPANTS

- **James Hanafee '22** *Secretary General*
- **Grace Rosner '22** *Assistant Secretary General*
- **Zeke Lloyd '24**
- **Jacob Tow '24**
- **Brigitte Arcoite '24**
- **Andrew De Figueiredo '22**
- **Filip Carnogursky '22**
- **Sophie Murphy '23**
- **Beatrice Roussell '24**
- **Owen Brown '24**
- **Nick Cleveland-Stout '23**
- **Saigopal Rangaraj '23**
- **Zack Weiss '22**



STUDENT HIGHLIGHT

Nick Cleveland-Stout '22, is the current chapter chair of CC's John Quincy Adams Society. Over the summer, he served as a U.S. Department of State intern for the Bureau of NEA/PPD.

He recalls, "as an intern with the Office of Press and Public Diplomacy at the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, I work with embassies across the region on public diplomacy and public affairs programs of the government." At CC he leads discussions on foreign policy and invites guest speakers to the Colorado College campus to engage in a wide range of foreign policy subjects such as cybersecurity, grand strategy, and sanctions.



STUDENT HIGHLIGHT

Grace Rosner '22, worked as a laboratory research intern for Dr. Steven Leach at Dartmouth College Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

Rosner is grateful for her MUN experience at CC, which fomented her core values and cultivated her confidence in a community that can sometimes feel intimidating. She notes, "MUN helps you think critically quickly and [that]translated seamlessly to science research on how to communicate with clarity and concision." Rosner says she believes exuding kindness with confidence helps engage listeners when delivering research presentations. STEM knowledge is only the first step; knowing your audience helps instruct the formality and style of presentation. She believes MUN taught the extraordinary skill of relating content back to the audience, checking in extemporaneously, then moderating content. "The audience's capacity to understand links directly to retention, as scientists (also) have short attention spans...you have to meet people at their level and a MUN unmoderated caucus was paramount to learning how to express your ideas on a more intimate level while working to make connections."



Deksyos, Stephen and Colleen



and Yale as a result of the team's excellent performance during the 2019-20 season, qualifying for the National Championship... our Mock Trial team attended a total of 11 tournaments over the course of the season!

TOURNAMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Colorado College's A-team took 6th place at UCLA's UCLASSIC Tournament, 5th place at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln's Scarlet and Cream Invitational, and 5th place at AMTA Regional Tournament 4-B, thus advancing the team to the Opening Round Championship Series. Members of both the A-team and B-team won numerous individual awards at various competitions:

- **Lauren Porter '22** - Outstanding Attorney at University of South Carolina
- **Theodore Weiss '21** - Outstanding Witness at University of California, Los Angeles
- **Bryan Moreno-Lopez '23** - Outstanding Witness at University of Michigan
- **Linden Heffelfinger '23** - Outstanding Witness at University of Nebraska and Regionals
- **Julia Fenn '24** - Outstanding Attorney at Case Western Reserve University and Regionals

At the beginning of the 2019-20 season, Colorado College's Mock Trial team was ranked 263rd in the nation by AMTA. After two years of continuous improvement and success, going into the 2021-22 season Colorado College will be ranked 104th.

The team is looking forward to returning to in-person competition, but is ready to compete on Zoom again this year. Mock On!

MOCK TRIAL

The Colorado College Mock Trial team was extraordinarily fortunate to continue competing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although all in-person competition was canceled, the American Mock Trial Association switched to a new all-online format for tournaments during the 2020-21 school year.

Adapting to mock trial over Zoom was challenging; the team had to learn how to be compelling in an activity that relies heavily on presence, style, and "controlling the courtroom" when presented from a small box on a screen. The teams spent many evenings in breakout rooms in Zoom working on emotion, fluency, passion and internet connectivity issues. They navigated the Ethernet, hotspots, cameras, microphones, and even a campus internet outage during practice and competition.

One advantage of the all-online format was that our students were able to attend more tournaments than ever. CC was invited to prestigious tournaments hosted by UCLA





COACH
HIGHLIGHT

After eight years of dedicated work to the college's Mock Trial team, **Regina Walter '80**, has decided to officially retire as head coach. Regina guided Mock Trial to enormous success and the team doubled in size since its inaugural year in 2013. Under her tenure, at least one team qualified for the Open Round Championship Series in all but two years. Two teams qualified for Nationals, and were ranked in the top 20 teams at Nationals in 2013. Walter has graciously offered to serve the team as a volunteer coach and lead the regional tournament in February 2022 at the Colorado Springs Municipal Courthouse. Judge Walter was appointed to the El Paso County Bench in August 2008. Prior to her appointment at CC, she was a juvenile magistrate for 21 years. She helped create the Colorado College Mock Trial team in the fall of 2013 with **Taylor Kelson '14**. We are so grateful to Regina for her hard work over the years and we're glad that she'll still be working with our students on a volunteer basis- thank you, Regina!

LOOKING AHEAD

We are very proud of our growing Competitive Communications program. Our students continue to redefine and raise standards in research, discipline, and competition as exhibited by their successes in **Speech and Debate, Mock Trial, and Model United Nations teams**.

As we celebrated the expansion and diversity of all of our student teams, we also updated and improved performance and peer-training strategies in on-campus programming via Middle Ground. Our virtual programming encouraged constructive discourse outside of competition in meaningful ways through public forum discussions and post-event dialogues. We are so appreciative of Dean of Students/Vice President for Student Life **Rochelle Dickey '83, P'19** and her fourth year of overall direction and support of our program.

FUNDING IMPACT

The Colorado College Forensics Program has enjoyed generous support from donors over the years, and this support has been impactful in positive ways for the program and our students. Even though in-person tournaments were suspended this past year due to the pandemic, we're looking forward to in-person engagement:



1. The James "Al" Johnson 1956 Endowed Debate Fund offsets considerable expenses as we host the Annual James "Al" Johnson Memorial Tournament.
2. The Johnson Debate Fund also lent support to new opportunities for our students to travel and compete, most notably to return to the International Forensics Association competition in Tokyo, Japan, in March 2022. Although that tournament did not occur, this Fund will be used as our students return to travel and in-person competition.
3. Thanks to the wonderful generosity of some of our long-standing donors and former debaters, most notably key alumni from the Class of 1967, we have a newly established James "Al" Johnson Endowed Scholarship. When fully endowed, this scholarship will provide need-based support on an annual basis for students actively participating in the Forensics Program at Colorado College.
4. The Apollonian Club Prize is another component of our endowed funds, which allows us to award a cash prize each year to the outstanding student in our Forensics Program. **Noah Hirshorn '20** was a proud recipient of the 2020 Prize at Honors Convocation in May 2020.
5. Our Competitive Communications House is a very visible and vital naming opportunity for a donor to make a lasting impact at Colorado College.

We anticipate increased team membership, continued successful competition, and advancement, including a place on the international stage, and enjoy our home in the Competitive Communications House. Colorado College is indeed grateful to our generous supporters, whose donations provide necessary support as our students continue to engage, learn, and grow.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Molly Bodnar

Associate VP and Campaign Director
mbodnar@coloradocollege.edu • Phone: (719) 659-9735

Rochelle T. Dickey '83

Dean of Students/Vice President for Student Life
rdickey@coloradocollege.edu • Phone: (719) 389-6684

Sarah Hinkle

Director of Competitive Communications
shinkle@coloradocollege.edu • Phone: (719) 389-6509

Colorado College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. Colorado College is an equal opportunity employer committed to increasing the diversity of its community. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, religion, gender identity or expression, disability, or sexual orientation in our educational programs and activities or our employment practices.