

## **Information for New and Prospective Members:**

Greetings from UMass's Policy Debate Team! It is excellent that you are interested in our team and in debate in general. This is the general information about what debate is and what our team is about, to give you a basic idea. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us ([debate@stuaf.umass.edu](mailto:debate@stuaf.umass.edu)).

### **What is "policy debate"?**

While there are many types of debate, our team competes in a style known as policy debate, which (especially at the collegiate level) is considered the most prestigious. Policy debate is extended topic; that is, it centers on a single resolution that is debated for a whole year. The resolution is always a proposition of policy; that is, it is always of the form "the United States Federal Government should [do something]." The debate is also switch-side debating, meaning teams must debate both in support of and against the resolution. Finally, the debate is also evidence-based, meaning it centers on research and preparation, rather than extemporaneous speaking.

Actual debates take place in rounds at tournaments held both regionally and nationally throughout the year. A round takes place between two teams (from different schools) each with two members. One team affirms (or debates for) the resolution, while the other negates (or debates against) it. A normal tournament consists of six preliminary rounds, with the best advancing into single-elimination bracket-based "out-rounds" to determine the overall winner of the tournament. Most tournaments include novice, junior varsity, and varsity divisions based on experience. In addition to team awards, individuals are recognized through speaker awards that are independent of win-loss record.

### **About our team:**

In the interest of fairness and honesty (as well as pride in team history) I think it's also important for everyone to know a bit about us as a team, since we are unique in the debate community. While debate has a long and accomplished history at UMass, the program as non-existent as recently as the late 1990's, and our current team began in 2000-2001. We are, therefore, a fairly new RSO here on campus, and we are entirely student-run. We have no coach, and none of our (current) team members did this style of debate before coming to college. This occasionally puts us at a competitive disadvantage, as many schools who we compete against treat debate as the equivalent of another sport (complete with paid coaches, large travel budgets, and large demands of time and effort of team members). However, we are lucky that the East region of the national debate association which we're a part of (known as CEDA) is very novice-friendly. We get tremendous amounts of help from other schools, and there are a high number of debaters that are at the novice level. As a team, we are exploring possibilities for obtaining more funding and a coach, but up until this point this has been our M.O.