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# Mission statement

The Collegiate Advocacy, Research and Debate (CARD) format[[1]](#footnote-2) prioritizes creating an enriching educational experience where students can develop abilities relevant to participating in modern and diverse democratic societies. Core learning objectives include the ability to form and present persuasive oral arguments to diverse audiences, identifying the properties of strong and weak arguments, apprehending, organizing and mobilizing scholarship, and building and sustaining collaborations with others, including people of differing backgrounds and perspectives.

All CARD participants - students, critics, and educators – share the fundamental responsibility to sustain a welcoming learning environment. Debate requires disagreement, and humans often struggle to offer or receive criticism. To foster a robust community of arguers, all should commit to learning from one another by practicing respectful engagement and listening as if the debate round is an extension of the college classroom – as it is. Like the college classroom, debate is a laboratory for testing ideas, perspectives, and commitments through argumentation.

The primary question in CARD is whether the affirmative team has successfully discharged their burden of proof through an advocacy in favor of the proposition. The “burden of proof” is the obligation to prove with clear and convincing arguments that an advocacy is a necessary and sufficient response to the problems outlined by those advocating change. Negative teams bear the “burden of rejoinder”, where their primary responsibility is to refute and undermine the specific arguments offered by the affirmative. Negative teams may introduce their own change advocacy, accepting the burden of proof for those arguments as competitive tests of affirmative advocacy.

CARD critics play the challenging dual role of audience and educator. Their responsibility is to inform competitors about the soundness of their arguments and advocacy while providing instruction on how to improve. An equally important responsibility is creating a healthy learning environment where students are motivated to improve.

CARD features a “community library” as the sole source of directly quotable material in the debate. When evidence from the library is used, students should provide a clear oral debate citation that identifies the author and their relevant qualifications. Ideas, concepts, and examples that do not come directly from the community library may be used throughout the debate, but debaters must accept responsibility for communicating them to critics without authoritative evidence, including the risk that a critic may not understand or believe complicated ideas or obscure examples unsupported by scholarship. The community library should be informed by the interests and aspirations of students.

Further guidance about the CARD format and governance is found in the CARD Constitution [URL] and the Community Library and Library Guide [URL] documents.

The Event and Philosophy and Critic Norms document may be revised by a majority vote of core members at one of the two primary annual business meetings.

# Achieving CARD’s Vision: Applying this philosophy

The philosophy outlined in this document is integral to promoting academically rigorous debate practices. However, it is not intended to be a code to police or punish competitors. It provides instead a benchmark for all participants. Directors should use this philosophy to prepare students, educators, and critics for what to expect at CARD events. Students should use this document when researching and designing arguments for use in competition or when contributing library documents. Critics especially should call upon this format philosophy as they articulate their approach to evaluating CARD debates and should align their feedback with event goals. Everyone should appreciate that mastering a new format is unavoidably challenging. All participants are engaged in learning. Performances that fall short of these standards should invite constructive feedback and appropriate ratings (whether wins, losses, or individual ratings) to help students understand areas where improvement is needed and how they can improve. It is also vital that students are encouraged to appreciate their capacity to improve.

# Public communication in CARD

All stakeholders in CARD, whether debater, critic, coach, assistant, or director, must embrace the format’s orientation toward *public* communication. CARD does not understand “public” to mean that only simplistic or “safe” ideas are engaged. Nor does the format assume “public” refers solely to speaking pace and style. Strategies for effective public communication are as varied and diverse as our society, and there is no single acceptable means of public communication. CARD grounds its understanding of public communication in the foundational terms of *Collegiate* *Advocacy, Research, and Debate*. Debate and forensics at the collegiate level should align with higher education’s core goals and CARD locates debate as a classroom where students develop and hone capabilities vital to participating in contemporary society. This core premise is reflected in each of the activity’s key terms.

Collegiate *Advocacy* should intentionally develop and reinforce the aptitudes and experiences that help students increase their capacity to lead change in their communities. This shared responsibility extends from the preparation and oral presentation of arguments by students to the feedback and instruction students receive from educators. Collegiate debate must reflect higher education’s commitment to challenging intellectual inquiry and remain open to a wide spectrum of ideological viewpoints and values. However, all arguments and communication strategies should align with the learning goals of the format and affirm the dignity and respect owed to all participants.

Emphasizing *advocacy* requires that all participants acknowledge that debate is not a detached simulation or strategy game; participants should act in good faith and represent with care the issues and communities connected to a debate. Participants should respect their opponents and the ideas and perspectives they bring to debates. This requires listening to others because effective advocacy is more than the mere expression of one’s own ideas but also requires engaging and persuading others, including opponents and critics.

Collegiate *Research* plays a significant (although not exclusive) role in ensuring CARD debate hones information literacy proficiency, including sophisticated research skills. In analyzing and synthesizing the arguments developed by experts for their own purposes, students are exposed to powerful models of scholarly argument and opportunities to learn how to utilize expertise to support their own arguments. CARD is unique in its goal of teaching debaters how to *communicate* evidence. The community library includes complicated, dense, and controversial ideas. Participants should work to ensure that their arguments are understandable for a diversity of audiences. CARD critics should provide constructive feedback helping students translate ideas from technical or expert arenas and circulate them effectively across wider spheres.

Collegiate *Debate* provides a format that both constrains and empowers participants. The two-sided affirmative/negative structure requires that communication between debaters be accessible and transparent. Participants must also be mindful to ensure their arguments, interactions, and feedback invite (or at least acknowledge the need for) engagement and refutation. Participants should embrace a growth-oriented mindset acknowledging that everyone is engaged in the process of learning.

# Theory and procedural arguments

Disputes may arise over whether a particular argument is permitted. While such “procedural” questions may emerge during a CARD debate, they do not supersede the primary obligations of either team. Disputes about procedure or debate theory must be resolved in line with the larger substance of a debate. “Debates about debate” should thus adhere to the following norms. First, the team initiating a dispute should commit to it as a sustained line of advocacy, not a peripheral distraction. Second, procedural arguments are treated as narrow questions of fact. For example, rather than a debate about whether an entire class of counterplans is competitive/fair, debaters should focus on whether the counterplan at hand is competitive or fair. Third, the implication of procedural arguments should be connected to fundamental burdens of proof and rejoinder. In other words, debaters should argue (and critics should adjudicate) how the procedural question affects the larger substance of the debate. Rather than rejecting a team entirely on a procedural technicality, critics should seek to provide a holistic evaluation of the debate.

## Topicality

Affirmative teams must be firmly within the scope of the CARD topic to satisfy their burden of proof. Whether the affirmative *needs* to be topical is not open to debate. Questions can arise as to *whether* the affirmative is topical. Disputes over whether the affirmative is topical are treated as narrow questions of fact, rather than a larger debate about the best way to interpret the topic. If the affirmative team convincingly demonstrates that their advocacy is within the scope of the topic, they satisfy a threshold burden and may win the debate on merits.

## Conditionality

CARD discourages conditional and intentionally contradictory argumentation. The format emphasizes the development of argumentation skills grounded in principles of advocacy. All participants should seek to maintain worldview consistency and make strategic decisions about which arguments to initiate and defend throughout a debate. Although debaters are not expected to only voice ideas or opinions they believe, they are expected to serve as faithful advocates of arguments they decide to advance.

## Fiat

CARD utilizes a theory of fiat that is limited and reciprocal. Rather than operating as a magic wand debaters wield to enact policies, fiat in CARD is the assumption that practical or timely obstacles to enacting the affirmative’s advocacy (such as a lack of support within political institutions or a legal barrier) are set aside for the purposes of the debate. The use of fiat is constrained by two factors. First, the affirmative is limited to fiat pertaining to the topic; they are afforded a sufficient level of fiat necessary for upholding their burden of proof. Second, the assumption of fiat is limited to the agency – scope of potential action - of the topic’s relevant actor established through the presentation of a solvency advocate. Finally, fiat in CARD is reciprocal. Limitations on the scope of fiat apply equally to the affirmative and negative.

# Adjudication: The responsibilities of critics of argument

CARD programs respect the adjudication norms, expectations, vocabularies, and experiences of all collegiate debate formats but insist that educators adjudicating in CARD evaluate debaters and their arguments according to the goals and expectations of the format.

CARD critics play the challenging dual role of audience and educator. Their responsibility is to simultaneously inform competitors about the soundness of their arguments and advocacy while providing instruction on how they can improve their arguments and advocacy. CARD critics are also expected to help build a welcoming and enriching learning environment. A CARD critic should help students understand where their arguments and advocacy are effective (and why), *and* where and how they can and should improve, while *also* building confidence that it is in the student’s capacity to make those improvements for future debates and to develop powerful capabilities they can use in their academic and post-graduation lives.

## Program responsibilities regarding critics

One of the richest sites for student learning and growth in any format of debate is the interaction between debaters and their audience. A successful experience for participants demands that CARD programs provide critics who are faithful to the format and its objectives, who are adequately prepared (including reviewing the quick guide below), and willing and able to prioritize student learning. Directors should use this philosophy when hiring critics for CARD events. Critics especially should call upon this philosophy as they define their own approach to evaluating CARD debates and aligning their feedback with event goals***.***

***For each critic at a CARD tournament, a program Director must attest that that critic will conform to CARD adjudication, educational expectations, and event norms. This attestation is presumed in the act of registering the critic on Tabroom.com.***

## **Event philosophy**

Every critic should understand and accept the role they are agreeing to fulfill by serving as a CARD adjudicator. It is crucial for critics to acknowledge they are engaging in collegiate teaching. An educator’s purpose is to provide critical and supportive feedback about student performance that is in line with both the goals of the activity and the choices of the student. That feedback should seek to promote growth, confidence, intellectual curiosity, and relevant topic knowledge, not simply inform competitors how they won or lost a debate.

## **Minimum qualifications**

Every critic should meet the following minimum qualifications: 1) possess a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university; 2) exhausted or forfeited their eligibility to compete in intercollegiate forensics prior to the current academic term; 3) a willingness to uphold behavioral norms appropriate to a college classroom; and 4) Provide (at least) a 1 paragraph, CARD-specific statement about their judging philosophy published on Tabroom.com. This statement should provide relevant background about the critic and any specific argumentation or communication preferences that pertain to the activity. This requirement is not in force for final rounds to encourage expert and alumni participation.

CARD ratings and feedback

Every critic should be familiar with the goals and use of the CARD rating system. In addition to completing the CARD rating form for each debate they observe, critics should also be instructed to provide feedback to competitors about their performance in the rating areas during oral comments. When evaluating individual speakers, critics should avoid assigning identical numerical scores because this dilutes their instructional value. Please distribute scores

## Quick guide for CARD critics

**A CARD critic is an educator, not merely an umpire fairly determining winners, because the CARD critic has two additional and more important responsibilities:**

1. Teach students how to improve their arguments and advocacy

2. Nurture a learning environment that sustains student participation

**1. ARGUMENT & ADVOCACY**

The central question is whether a world with implementation of affirmative advocacy is better or worse than one without.

EVERY TEAM: Must debate the current CARD topic [URL to topic]. While students can present any argument, including appeals to common, personal, and scholarly knowledge, only evidence from documents in the community library [URL to document library] may be cited directly.

AFFIRMATIVE: Must meet a burden of proof by offering clear and convincing arguments their topical advocacy is a necessary and sufficient response to the problems they outline.

NEGATIVE: Must meet the burden of rejoinder by refuting and undermining the specific case offered by the affirmative.

CARD CRITIC: The CARD critic is an educator - a critic of argument - tasked to help students understand how to improve their arguments and advocacy. Incomplete, incoherent, or inconsistent “arguments” do not constitute arguments, whether or not they receive a response. Critics should teach debaters *why* weak arguments are weak and *how* they could be improved. Critics should focus feedback on the arguments and ideas presented by students. Critics must help create an atmosphere of civil inquiry, learning, and belonging. Critics should announce the winner of a debate and explain their reasoning. **Critics must BOTH submit an electronic ballot** using their Tabroom.com account **AND complete the CARD speaker evaluation form.**

CONSTRUCTIVE SPEECHES: Initiate any argument germane to the topic

1st Affirmative (1AC): 6 minutes, present a topical case for change

1st Negative (1NC): 6 minutes, present arguments against the affirmative case for change

2nd Affirmative (2AC): 6 minutes, address negative arguments and develop the 1AC

2nd Negative (2NC): 6 minutes, develop arguments against the affirmative change

REBUTTAL SPEECHES: Focus attention on important arguments; no “new” arguments

1st Negative (1NR): 4 minutes, crystallize arguments against the affirmative case for change

1st Affirmative (1AR): 4 minutes, crystallize arguments for the affirmative case for change

2nd Negative (2NR): 4 minutes, explain why the world without the affirmative is better

2nd Affirmative (2AR): 4 minutes, explain why the world with the affirmative is better

CROSS-EXAMINATION: 3-minute cross-examination after each constructive. The 1AC is questioned by the 2NC, the 1NC by the 1AC, the 2AC by the 1NC, and the 2NC by the 2AC.

PREPARATION TIME: Teams have 5 minutes of preparation time to use outside speeches and cross-examination.

**2. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

The highest responsibility of debaters and critics is to create and maintain an enriching and welcoming educational environment that respects each person and encourages their participation and learning about argumentation, advocacy, and the topic. While this is a shared responsibility, critics, as educators, should judiciously intervene to help nurture such a learning environment. Successful CARD critics teach students how to improve their arguments and advocacy through quality feedback. CARD critics teach students where and how they should improve while helping them appreciate that it is in their capacity to improve. Poor critics leave students dejected, feeling unwelcome, or confused about how to improve.

1. . Discussions over many years crystallized in a late-night conversation at the 2018 Alta Conference involving representatives of Puget Sound, Western Washington, and the University of Oregon. This document was authored by Trond Jacobsen and Travis Cram. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)