

Action items from today's meeting:

- Ombuds proposal tabled back to Equity committee. Andrew Urevig is the contact person Cort will follow up with
- \$750 approved for training for Ombuds panel members (contact [mdtaombuds@mdta.com](mailto:mdtaombuds@mdta.com))
- Cheyenne will put together a survey regarding what students / coaches would like to see for tournaments.
- Andrew U is going to start a reading group. Reach out to join ([urevi007@umn.edu](mailto:urevi007@umn.edu))

Attendees (Apologies if I miss anyone, Zoom doesn't add new people in any particular order on my screen)

- Katie Scholz
- David Cram Helwich
- Cort Sylvester
- Rachel Baumann
- Bryce Piotrowski
- Raymond Zhang
- Thomas McCarthy
- Andrew Tichy
- Jason Meyer
- Becky Chabot
- Rachel de Sobrino
- Celisia Stanton
- Chris McDonald
- Doug Hoverson
- Deserea Niemann
- Andrew Urevig
- Jake Swede
- Amy Cram Helwich
- Dan Bordwell
- Tammy Trout McIntyre
- Chyene Thibido
- Jason Meyer
- Ron Davis
- Kendrick Walton
- Andy Charrier
- DJ Brynteson

Two issues to discuss:

- 1) Further discussion of Ombuds Proposal
- 2) Preparations of Online Tournaments

Initial Note from Cort re: Harassment and Discrimination Policy – we are subject to MSHSL policy and NSDA policies, still looking into whether we need our own policy

Another note: normally membership meeting is at CTAM, but CTAM likely won't happen in person, may also be a good idea to move it earlier to discuss virtual tournaments / how to work them, etc. Will revisit at the end of the night. Likely will be a virtual meeting. Plus side – gives us some flexibility

Thing 3: NCFL Judges – will be hosted (Jason Meyer and Travis Rother) in TC, has been voted on. Will be hosted in the twin cities in 2021 over memorial day weekend. 318 days until it starts!

- at some point in time we need to post a survey for former students who might be interested in being a hired judge. Will have 180-220 in LD / PF / Policy / Congress.
- will have teams coming from all over – 1800 participants in downtown mpls, 4-5K adults / students combined.
- will need judges available to hire – on average payout per day (Sa – prelims, Su – elim) ~ \$100 + parking / food. Want more experienced, but no 'years-out' requirement (at least not on Saturday, may have an 18 mo out requirement on Sunday? Will get confirmation)
- most events in the convention center; policy is a huge requirement

## Main Agenda Items

### 1) Ombuds (turning over to Becky)

- o Becky – tried to incorporate as many comments as possible. Want flexibility, need ability to deal with situations as they arise. Requirements for Ombuds lowered – 5 years total, 3 years as an adult
- o Des – we all want a magic fix, but this proposal is a great opportunity to make a step forward. It does a lot.
- o Katie – asking about coaches
- o Becky – if student doesn't want coach to be part of it, e.g. coach is good friends with person making the comment. Coaches will be notified in every instance EXCEPT where students don't them to be.
- o Cheyenne – met with some coaches of color about proposal. Very thorough, but a few concerns about process. Not transparent about how the process happened – nobody saw it until it was public to MDTA. Did have coaches of color who had things to contribute. Looking at data, students had concerns about school / diversity. Not something we can handle in a debate setting. That was the only student data that we got on this proposal. Would have liked more contribution from students and people of color facing this. Women were represented, but no contributions from people experiencing issues that the POC community deals with.
- o Cort – from MDTA org. Assignment of responsibility of proposal drafting / responsibility falls on MDTA. Becky volunteered to guide process. Not a lot of organizational oversight – intentionally – MDTA leadership does not reflect diversity of community. Wanted to allow for comments from full group.
- o Des – (1) Des was at the meeting in question. Have asked for input many times, lots of opportunities to give input, (2) also intersectionality – misogamy, intersectionality as well as race.
- o Rachel – originally discussed at Roseville HS? Has been something that has been in progress for 2 years.
- o Cheyenne – yes, a group was assigned, that group did not see a proposal or an outline before it was brought to the entire MDTA. Got e-mails saying there was progress, but had no opportunity as a group

to make comments before it was brought to the entire MDTA. Small group wasn't given the option to give feedback.

- Cort's understanding was that there were two different processes. Had an equity task force. Have misspoke on this as well. Understanding was that MDTA hadn't 'tasked' a specific set of people to work on the proposal.
- (Sorry, I was looking for the May 2019 meeting minutes. Missed some discussion between Becky / Andrew)
- Andrew Urevig – coaches of color should have been included. The group tasked with equity had meetings, Becky missed some, but nothing was brought up to the committee, none of those voices were heard.
- Cheyenne – good to invite people from around the country. The group just wanted to see it along the way. But the question is whether this will be used / useful for kids or will we just have three people sitting around in tab every weekend?
- Celisia – it is prudent to recognize that any solutions suggested / created by white folks will have issues – that's the problem generally. Becky did reach out to get feedback, didn't have time to give feedback. Had a task force that met every month this year, should have been reviewing / providing comments during that process.
- Celisia – biggest issue with proposal is that the issues are systemic. Solutions that happen after the fact don't actually solve those root issues. Not even sure if this is something that would help students. Students are malleable, could learn. Hesitant about punitive solutions. Q: if this situation played out in real time, would it help students? or will it result in students doubling down on their beliefs? There are certain people of color in this community who are facing significant harms. Coaches representing those students are small in number. If those people are now on the Ombuds panel, then that judge pool is gone. A black student having a black judge is rare. And if not, then the panel is not diverse.
- Katie – would also like to see some dispute resolution training as well. Concerned about punitive
- Thomas McCarthy – as a former athletic coach, a big concern is the things that kick out – MSHSL has clear reporting and penalties that we do not follow well. Rules are cut and dry and we have to follow them. Ombudsman piece would need to be clearly separate, should be separate from the reporting procedure / penalties for those. That's beyond MDTA. Also, look at the system – how can we use this program to improve interactions of youth. Had trouble in the first draft – the coaches already meet to solve, and there's a penalty. Because that's the procedure. Latest draft puts it together a little more. But still not separate enough – want to see a program that helps support interactions between debaters.
- Becky – MSHSL does not have clear and easy way to report a fine arts judge / coach. Easier to report athletics officials. Having talks now with when a reporting requirement is triggered, etc. Judge making repeated comments is actionable. MSHSL will follow back up and decide what MSHSL | MDTA split should be. Difference also is that it also allows us to have conversations / use them as educational moments. The conversation will be more productive. Also helps being able to deal with issues as they arise. Also helps us identify adults that are misbehaving. AS MSHSL policies become clear, we will make them clear to the entire community.
- Thomas McCarthy – contacted MSHSL, discussed with Cort – the MSHSL's president's stance was that the rules must be followed, reporting procedures are clear. (MSHSL BYLAW 209.00 has clear reporting and penalties for Sexual/Racial/Religious Harassment/Violence.) These rules are cut and dry – if one judge does something wrong once, that's it.

- Becky – there’s a difference between unintentional racism and hate speech. This process can help the in-between. Becky working to get operative definitions.
- Rachel – what concerns me right now is a conversation had with students at policy debate camp. Topic is criminal justice reform. Students want something now to help them process difficult conversations / moments they will have this season. Students seem to be heartened that we’re discussing. If we go ahead with this, it would be “something” – could have a conversation during the season to be more proactive instead of re-active. Wanted to try that instead of doing nothing. Want to learn and be a good advocate, but it’s concerning about what we should say to students who want to do something right now. Very concerned that if something doesn’t happen tonight, then it won’t happen. We should be able to recognize that we have good intentions, will make mistakes along the way.
- Amy Cram Helwich – sent in a fair amount of feedback. Did include entire MDTA executive board / folks on equity committee. (1) What about idea of ombuds panel and have further discussion about training / dispute resolution process would go forward. (2) after reading this, reading the initial survey, there is a disconnect between ombuds panel reaching concerns that students raised. Vast majority of incidents were not incidents at schools. Where is our reach / what is our locus of control? We can control practice and tournaments. Have suggestions and things that would like to see changed. Would also like to see additional training from coaches, a harassment statement, a living truth about our culture / behaviors, and should have comprehensive judge training. UDL has judge training to have shared expectations. There’s so much that could be headed off if we had shared realities. Can’t have hard conversations if we aren’t starting from a place of mutual trust / regard. In policy community, have been having summits every other year for the last 6 years – has been really helpful. Need students and coaches to feel valued. Need training and community building.
- Raymond Zhang – worked on survey, went to equity task force meetings. Obvious things for people of color that are happening here. (1) It’s not hard to find people of color in the community. Set aside time to discuss this on equity committee agenda. It’s not hard to reach out to POC to talk about this. (2) unclear if this was academic work / consulting work / or what the purpose was. Initial idea was that this was a consulting company that Becky / Keith started. Then it was Becky’s dissertation. Concerning, as a POC, that white people are using this as a means of advancing other motivations without being clear of the original intent. Clear that some things were omitted for academic reasons. Uncomfortable engaging with a proposal like this that’s supposed to help POC community without POC input. Need to put in the work to find POC, and determine what is academic and is not.
- Becky – only part that is academic is the social ethic. Every group needs a common ethical paradigm from which ombuds are making decisions. E.g. need to know what our morals are. Need to have an ethical paradigm so that we all have an orientation. The group has to communally contextualize the ethic. Ethics are practical things. No one writes an ethic as an academic theory. It’s designed to be a practical tool.
- Raymond: (1) will this proposal help with doctoral degree, (2) was this intentionally part of the consulting company Becky / Keith were creating. Intention of research is usually listed in research / proposal.
- Becky – this does nothing for dissertation. Put it through as a consulting name, then it becomes a document that can be used for other things. No immediate benefit of any kind.
- Dan Bordwell – many of these conversations have been around for 10 years. MDTA has structural issues, any framework is moot if we don’t address those issues. Incremental change doesn’t change the structure. Dan comes in and out of meetings based on level of frustration and nothing changes.

- Kendrick – agree with Celisia and Raymond. This is a proposal that has been on everyone’s mind since 2019 meeting. Equity task force has been meeting and wanted to discuss this every month. That wasn’t done. Looking at the proposal, it’s reactionary instead of taking proactive steps. Have coached black students, have had them quit the team because of how they’ve been treated. To say that this is a start feels like we’re not doing enough – POC do not have time to wait. We should be more proactive in what we’re doing. Especially as we’re transitioning into an online season. If the harassment is happening in a student’s home, then students will quit.
- Rachel de Sobrino – concerns were shared / brought up at the first equity task force meeting. Voiced these concerns, wasn’t until the proposal was circulated 4 days before May meeting that anything was brought up. These same concerns were brought up 10 months ago. None have been answered, could have been dealt with at those meetings.
- Richard Brynteson – general concept of the proposal is good, but want more proactive steps to happen. Virtual season may give us time to do more things – will have time to record judge trainings. Might make sense to table proposal back to equity committee, and think about what proactive things we can do.
- Cheyenne – has several proposals that will be brought up in fall that are more proactive.
- Ron Davis – hearing two questions: (1) can we accept the process or go back to the drawing board to get the right people involved? (2) can we actually execute this. But don’t want to solve #2 without answering #1.
- Becky – entire purpose of proposal is that it is a 1-year pilot, community has a year to put in input and adjust.
- Cort – organization will do what membership decides to do. As individual coach reacting – we are perilously close at the point where any further delay will make it impossible to do it. There is training time, trainers need to have schedules finalized. A vote to delay is likely a vote to kill this for the 2020-2021 season.
- Richard Brynteson – we talk a lot, don’t have time to do stuff. When September hits, we’re going to be swamped.
- Amy Cram Helwich – would MDTA want to be a member / be involved to oversee that process part? Would MDTA take a role?
- Cort – seems like more directiveness / clarity on board’s intent would have been helpful at the outset of this process.
- Amy – suggestion / question to help on process. UDL also has a lot of resources. Boston Debate League has a model as well – different mechanism to report tournament concerns.
- Richard - MOTION – table this back to Equity until September, with the explicit goal to add proactive steps. In September we take an up / down vote. May not be immediately implementable, but we’ll be able to implement by November 1.
- Katie – Second
- Becky – note that trainers have all agreed with the intention to train in August. Might potentially impact trainers.
- Cort observation – opportunity for multiple different actions. Tabling would resolve for tonight. If motion passes, we push off until September. Could also look at other motions.

Vote results: on a vote of 16-6, the motion does PASS. The proposal is tabled until September.

- Chair of Equity Task Force for Cort to interface with: Andrew Urevig has been organizing

- Richard: Motion to allocate \$750 for training
  - o Rachel: Can the trainings be made available for anyone? for all coaches in MN?
  - o Becky: can ask trainers, but many are designing for 10-12?
  - o DJ: could record?
  - o Becky: Yes
  - o Rachel: That would help be more proactive.
  - o Cort: if we do this, people interested in being Ombuds should identify themselves and be available.
  - o Becky: if interested, e-mail mdtaombuds@mdta.com

Vote Results: unanimous vote

- o David: process Q – need a process to record minutes of committee. What is / will be documented.
- o Becky: data collection addressed – program coordinator keeps in locked physical / password protected folder
- o David: if a finding is made, Equity committee for UofM will want to know. Notes need to be taken for committee deliberations. Notes would be part of sealed record. Could speak with panel chair.
- o Andrew Urevig: one last process point – we just spent two hours talking about process. Very frustrating and worthy discussion. Process is everything. There is frustration around whether the MDTA is useful. Systems are important, process is important, whose included is important. The issue is that we are not changing our systems. We don't know what will change the systems. There is so much racism in our community. Former black debaters / black women – they talk about their experience and 'trauma' keeps coming up – an institutionally white space. LD novice topic encourages students to stand up and read racist arguments. Initial reaction as white people is to not understand. We need to acknowledge that if we are white, we are racist – we benefit from racism and the system is warped. Debate community will never be a safe place for POC unless we each make a commitment to have that internal interrogation and commit to change. Most of us are white, benefit from systems of racism, need to read "Radical Theory from a Black Feminist". Each of us white people are racist. The proposal process was racist. We need to address this. This community is institutionally, systemically racist. No policy to pass, need to move quickly toward what does it look like for structural change. We are failing them and we need to have a conversation and radical action. There's a lot of white fragility, we need to make that change quickly and actualize this change. There's a lot of work to do. We need to continue to do that work.

## 2) Virtual Tournaments

- o Cort: lots of challenges facing the school systems in terms of figuring out what school will look like in the fall. We need to be prepared for the entire tournament season to be virtual. NSDA has sent around links to the beta of their platform. They intend to have it available, but it may have a cost component. Classroom.cloud will cost \$30 / room / day.
- o Richard: Don't have NSDA pricing, but software is called nsdacampus – under the hood is jitze software. Took 45 minutes to test it – looks and feels like zoom. Can jump into an mdta jitze room. Rumor is that NSDA will be \$7-8. We have to test it, but it might be a lot cheaper.
- o Amy – closing out online camp, have learned a ton through that process. Will be debriefing the UDL team soon. If September team meeting is moved earlier / discussed then, would be happy to debrief to help support community to move online. Also part of a national UDL working group for guidance on a check-off / support list.

- Richard: using Tabroom? No. Procedural piece – need judges are trained (1) to be a judge and (2) for the tech aspect
  - Amy – should also all prepare, students may be debating from their own school if possible, for better connection. But we might be doing online tournaments with kids at home. That radically changes what an online tournament looks like – difficult both for judges and students to have uninterrupted time. A lot of kids may not have a long tournament day available.
  - Bryce – need more time for technical difficulties / lunch. May want to consider changing from 5 rounds / awards to splitting tournaments to over afternoons. Split by segments of time to give people breaks from the screen.
  - Richard Brynteson – need to consider scheduling / time management.
  - Becky Chabot – have a lot of adults that are immunocompromised – in addition to student factors, also have risks to adults.
  - Des – Lakeville’s tournament will be online.
  - Cort – from perspective of MDTA – what can MDTA do to facilitate tournament hosts ability to go virtual. Can MDTA undertake the cost to host the server? Not going to volunteer him to be tech support for the year for that. But NSDA is also considering being cheaper by not having tech support either. Need to consider scheduling / what kind of resources are people looking for?
  - Richard – will reach out to Nathan Woodarz, who has some experience.
  - Katie – recommend a zero round? Or a short ‘check-in’ and then zero round
  - Richard – maybe a dedicated team for kids?
  - Chris McDonald – had a virtual “bus” for TOC that would allow coaches to check kids in every morning.
  - Bryce – second virtual bus comment.
  - Cort – will definitely need help at the hosting side.
  - Bryce – will need to get more people familiar with tabbing, avoid the burden on everyone having to figure out how to run an online tournament.
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- Becky – need to go back and address what Andrew said. Trauma compounds trauma. Need to address / acknowledge the trauma.
  - Celisia – Andrew explained real experience of POC in debate, and the group re-directed. All are too uncomfortable to say something. Having two separate conversations in the chat. The trauma being experienced by students in debate, and the white coaches on this call are continuing the problem. What are we changing on our teams? In our greater life?
  - DJ – apologize.
  - Katie – apologized for redirecting / not talking. Don’t want to contribute to trauma of students.
  - Cort – love that debate has helped to reconsider own paradigms. Paradigmatic discomfort with Kritik / identity politic arguments. Forces recognition to move beyond real policy ideas. Forces us to question our role in perpetuation of different forms of oppression. We need to make ourselves uncomfortable. Debate has made me see the ‘isms’ and makes me question my role in them. Second reason, has made Cort listen to voices that he wouldn’t otherwise have heard. We read those voices in the evidence, we don’t hear enough in this community, need to do more to change that. Debate is a situation where adults have to listen to students. We have to listen to those voices tell us how we’re falling short. Moving forward was not meant to be a denigration of the message.

- Cheyenne – how to transition to online debate is a good way to include voices of color and voices of student. Many students participated in national students – good time to reach out to own teams to see what they need for online tournaments. What did / did not work at NSDA / TOC. Need to consider more than just technology. Same for camps – how have those impacted students. Cheyenne could make a survey / google form about feedback for Nationals / Distance learning – what they would like to see in online debate.
- Des – will be sending out an amendment to constitution to add an equity officer to MDTA board.
- Cort – composition of executive board is specified by constitution, constitutional amendment has to be approved by 2/3 of members at a meeting. If by e-mail, would require 2/3 of entire membership. Has to either be introduced at meeting prior to one voted on, or circulated at least 2 weeks before meeting. Text has to be out 2+ weeks before the meeting. Next meeting will take place in plenty of time, will get that included.
- Des – open / interested in thoughts on amendment.
- Raymond Zhang – have talked about anti-blackness and whiteness. But by far the biggest minority group is “Asian-Americans” – as a coach of color, need to re-state that Asians are POC. Specific to Asian-American experience, it’s unique because identity is surrounded by invisibility – not “POC” but also not “white”. But Asian-Americans tend to model white supremacy quicker. When being ‘anti-black’ – the work to do that as an Asian-American is very difficult. Need to also understand that Asian-American kids also undergo systemic racism. Increase in hate crimes / violence right now. We ignore these things right now, but Asian-Americans are a big consumer of debate. Many have the privilege of going to more tournaments. There aren’t that many resources for what to do as an Asian person in this discussion. Don’t treat Asian kids as white kids. They aren’t indigenous or black, but they understand Race. Skeptical of commitment to equity. If you’re white, you need to build that trust yourself with POC students.
- Andrew U. – not fully fleshed out, but what we’re hearing is “will our community be committed to equity / justice for our students” – there’s a lot of skepticism. We need to take a lot of steps. Andrew U is going to start a reading group. E-mail to join: [urevi007@umn.edu](mailto:urevi007@umn.edu). The biggest source of learning is having these discussions. We need to do the readings. Work with MDI – camp has changed so much, based on recent grads. They teach so much about gender / race. Will talk to Equity Committee – question about how to improve equity.
- Kendrick – echoing other coaches. We lean on BIPOC instead of teaching ourselves. Can’t read it away. A lot of this falls on ourselves as white coaches to improve.
- Katie – want to see more training available for coaches generally.
- Amy – will join book club, wants to continue discussion.
- Becky is teaching an online course on using Matthew McConaughey and Sandra Bullock as the White Savior
- Amy – (1) will there be a link between equity officer / equity committee? (2) how do we debate criminal justice reform ethically? Want to have a conversation with teams / students to address issues. Looking to do a student town hall. Less informed about PF / LD. Could do a write up for the process / could be applicable to other topics as well.
- Des – intention of amendment would be to have an equity committee member serve as equity member of MDTA board.
- Cort – adjourning, thanks to everyone for engaging.