

MSDL Board Meeting Minutes

November 14, 2022 @ 7:30 PM

ZOOM meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 PM by the president, Greg Cunningham

Board Members in attendance

Joyce Albert, Joe Bowden, Scott Caron, Josh Cohen, Greg Cunningham, Sue Hennessey, Lisa Honeyman, Jim Honeyman, Sheryl Kaczmarek, Tammie Ruda, Chris Sheldon, and PJ Wexler

1. Patrick Blomberg Presentation - Student Engagement Committee

Patrick made a case for continuing the Student Engagement Committee (SEC) with a goal of creating a culture of engagement and inter-scholastic friendships in the league. Sophomores & Juniors, in particular, have lost out on the opportunity to build community in the MSDL due to the pandemic. They would like to use social media, including the MSDL Instagram account, which is currently dormant. To avoid it becoming a “one school” Instagram, leaders with access would include students from several schools and be held accountable. He suggested that each school could have representation on the SEC Board.

A question about whether there might be a way to expand the SEC to include both speech & debate schools. (Answer: Yes.)

The SEC would plan activities at tournaments to get people interacting. Maybe do some sort of icebreaker at the Novice Tournament next fall to start building community from the beginning of the season.

After Patrick left, the board discussed his proposal. We talked about how big an SEC Board should be. If every school has a representative, that could be 30-40 people, which is unwieldy when it comes to getting anything done. Maybe 5-6 people on the SEC Board with only 4 people having access to the Instagram account (2 speech + 2 debate, perhaps?).

Greg will follow up with Patrick.

2. Equity Report and Proposed Actions (Scott)

We spoke about an equity issue that emerged at the Revere tournament after finals. In response to concerns raised by the person who brought the incident to the attention of our equity officer, and the equity officer’s recommendations, we considered how we wanted to move forward.

We agreed that it would be a good idea to standardize the use of “content warnings” in rounds when students think that their material may trigger extreme or unwelcome emotions in audience members. They would be asked to note the topic in advance to give audience members an opportunity to leave the room. Chris will include that instruction in morning judge meetings, so that judges can instruct students in rounds to do that.

Chris, Kaz and Lisa will form a committee to draft a statement that will make our (the MSDL) community standards more explicit. They will present a draft at the next board meeting for us to vote on so we will have it in place for the rest of the season (probably starting in late January). In the meantime, we will encourage the use of content warnings in rounds. At opening student meetings, we will read our equity statement and direct students to use trigger warnings in rounds.

Scott, in his role as our board equity liaison, will have a conversation with the coach to make them aware of the situation. After that discussion, we will decide on next steps.

3. Congress Sub-Committee to revise rules (Joe)

Joe would like to form a committee to revise the congress rules for consistency and maybe include some rationale for why we do things the way we do. The committee will come up with a proposal to present at the annual meeting in the spring. He seeks board approval. (Which he received.) He will start reaching out to coaches to form a committee.

4. Access to tournaments (Joyce)

Tournaments are, for the most part, not being run by the MSDL, and folks should not add themselves to tournaments without going through the sponsoring school.

5. Varsity Extemp Cross-Ex Time limit

Joyce will reach out to coaches who have a lot of extempers to see if they would object to a shorter questioning period (maybe 1 minute?) or possibly eliminating cross-ex in finals. In Congress, 30 seconds to 1 minute works fine. It does help hold the speakers accountable, but 3 minutes seems long - especially when the NSDA time limit is 2 minutes. Once Joyce gathers some information, we will do an online vote about whether we want to shorten our cross-ex period, eliminate it or leave it at 3 minutes.

6. Review Constitution and By Laws

The language in our Constitution and By Laws needs to be updated.

Our publication rules are out of date (they refer to VHS and DVD). We also have language that talks about gender that needs to be changed. A table of contents would be nice, too. Joyce will take a look at the speech part of the rules doc in 2023 and make suggestions to bring back to the board. Josh will take a look at the debate sections and do the same. At some point, we will seek advice from our lawyer about our constitution.

New Business

Utilizing Speech Judges

Some schools bring so many competitors that we cannot use their judges. One possibility is to clear out one section in every event so that there are rounds for those judges to judge. We think that is

preferable to increasing the judge burden for other schools. Joyce will clear sections as needed going forward so that all judges have more equal loads.

Motion to adjourn: Cohen

2nd: J. Honeyman

The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 9:22 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

--Lisa Honeyman

Clerk/Secretary