

My experience as a member of the Speech and Debate team at Notre Dame was a formative experience for me. During my two year career, I received the degree of Superior Distinction from the National Speech and Debate Association. I was a two time PHSSL Senate finalist, including a 4th place finalist award my senior year. I was also a two time semifinalist at the NCFL Grand National Tournament, in addition to serving as a Presiding Officer in a Senate chamber. On the national circuit my senior year, I broke to finals at St. Joseph's tournament and semi-finaled at Princeton. Locally, I won the Mustang Classic and the Lafayette Invitational, while place 4th in a chamber at the Ridge invitational that featured multiple TOC competitors. But above all of the trophies and medals I won, the lessons I learned from Speech and Debate are the most valuable to me.

I have worked for the National Park Service for two summers, where I regularly interpret historic sites for the general public. I lead tours of more than 30 individuals at any given time. Speech and Debate trained me to be able to effectively communicate with an audience, to connect with them, and ensure that they were able to follow my presentation. Speech and Debate taught me to "think on my feet," so for the moments where a tour goes awry, I am ready and able to adapt. The research and writing skills that have seen me publish in prestigious journals and deliver presentations at academic conferences are rooted in my experience at Speech and Debate.

What I did not expect to gain from Speech and Debate is what has touched my life in so many ways : the people. Coach Rizzo has kept in touch with me and continues to support me, even attending the defense of my senior thesis at College! I made so many incredible friends through Speech and Debate, both from Notre Dame and from other schools. Almost 4 years removed from my high school graduation, the students I competed with (and against) remain some of my closest and most treasured friends. Every tournament was a moment I got to spend with people who meant so much to me and participate in an intellectually stimulating debate. I cherish every memory I have of Speech and Debate and wish I could only compete in more rounds with my all friends. Join the Speech and Debate team: you will love it.