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OU Ethics Bowl Team Braves the Windy City

When you work hard, good things come to you. That was the experience of the Oakland University Ethics Bowl team, whose second-place performance in the Upper Midwest Regional Ethics Bowl, held at Oakland University in November, helped them qualify for a trip to Nationals this March. The National Championship, held in Chicago, was a new and invigorating challenge.

“It was the culmination of all the work that we had put in this semester, and it was so rewarding,” said team member Genevieve Schmidt. “To work with my teammates and be able to express our ideas in this sort of an arena was a great experience that I will never forget.”

Oakland, which had been undefeated in Regionals, lost a disappointing three out of four matches at Nationals, though not for lack of philosophical sophistication. In their competition with eventual national champion Santa Clara University, Oakland was defeated by a single point.

“I thought we outperformed them in terms of the substantial philosophical content of our arguments,” Mark Rigstad, adviser to Oakland’s team, said. “The judges emphasized afterwards how difficult the decision was.”

Though the Oakland team – composed of students Schmidt, Nick Fontana, Samantha Sinclair, Hamza Ahmed, and Ian Anderson – could not always sway the judges, they emphasized other benefits of the experience.

“We learned so much from each other,” Schmidt said, attributing the learning to a trait rather appropriate in an Ethics Bowl team: “It definitely helped that we are all ethical people so there wasn’t internal drama. As we progressed forward with each round, we became more cohesive unified.”

The team appreciates the contributions of Rigstad and fellow coach Lisa Campbell.

“The experience would not have been the same,” said Schmidt, “without the philosophical tutelage of Mark, Lisa’s dedication to keeping us track, and the openness of the whole team.”

Campbell appreciated the precision and comprehensiveness that this year’s team displayed.

“Their arguments reflected many points of view,” she said, “yet were held together with a plurality that addressed each case’s salient points.

Rigstad, for his part, was enthusiastic in his praise for these diligent students.

“I’m so proud of everyone’s hard work, and the level of excellence that they all achieved as a team!”



Nick Fontana (center) proposes an argument as team members Genevieve Schmidt, Samantha Sinclair, Hamza Ahmed, and Ian Anderson (left to right) look on.