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Gardner-Webb Team Explores Ethical Issues Related to COVID-19 in 10th Annual Ethics Bowl

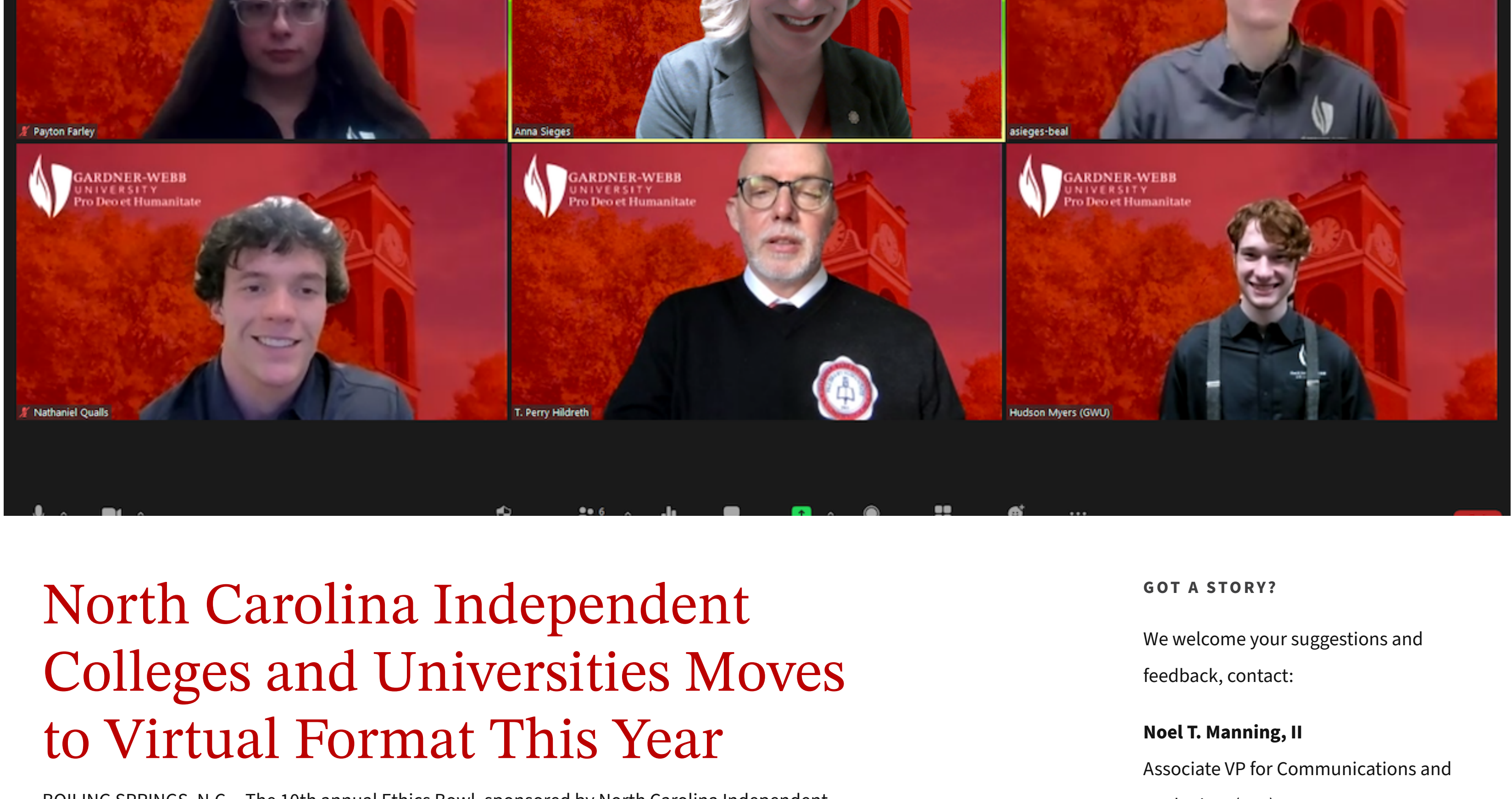
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ACADEMICS

Gardner-Webb Team Explores Ethical Issues Related to COVID-19 in 10th Annual Ethics Bowl

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON MARCH 26, 2021

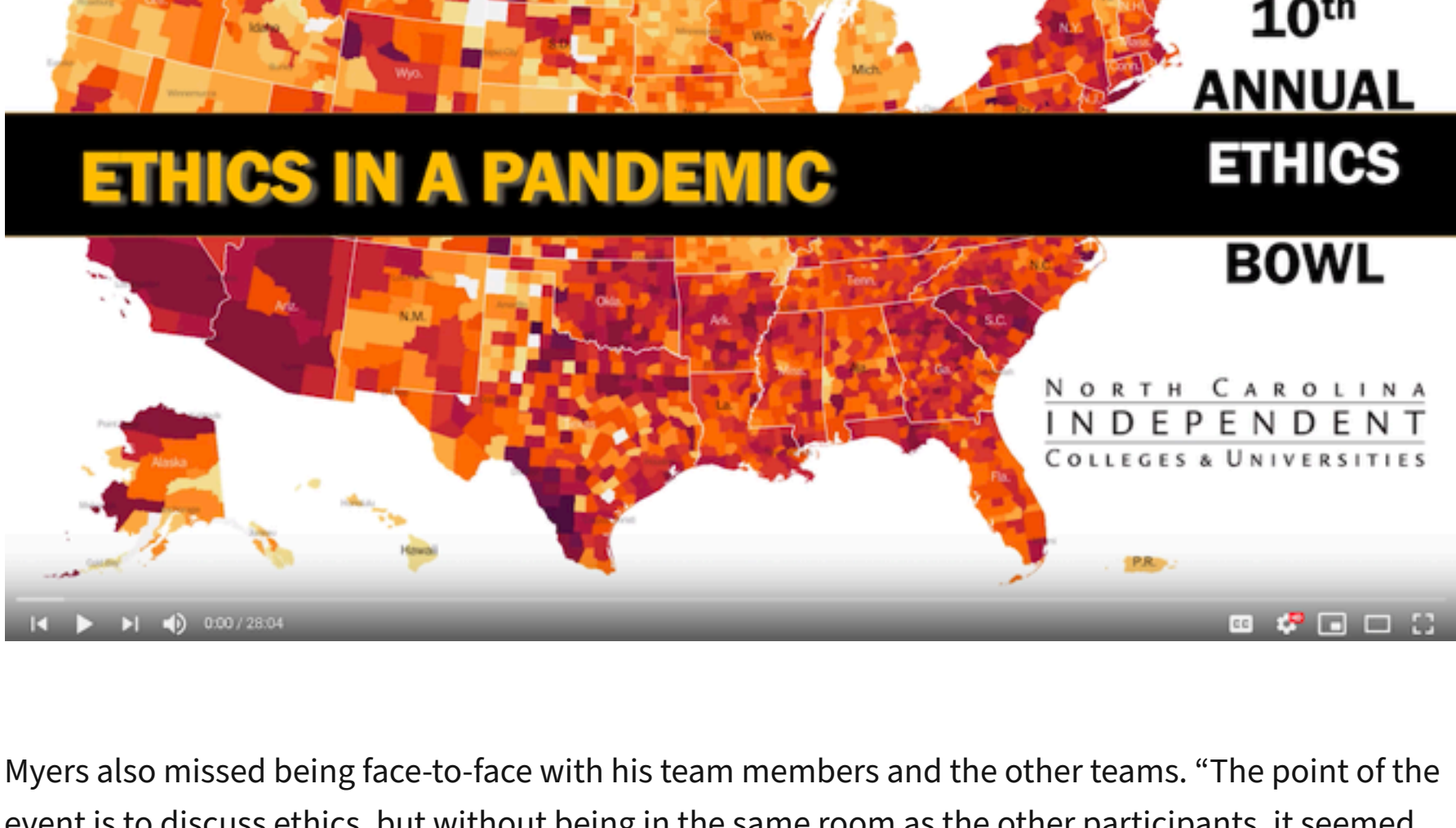


BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—The 10th annual Ethics Bowl, sponsored by North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities, was a virtual event this year, held via Zoom. The team from Gardner-Webb University was one of 16 to participate in the recent event. Because of the online format, the event was not a competition. Teams were asked to present their positions on two cases, which explored ethical issues relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the presentations were not judged, guests who had previously served as judges provided feedback to the teams.

Representing Gardner-Webb were Payton Farley, a junior majoring in biblical studies and minoring in philosophy and ethics; Noah Blanton, a senior psychology major; Nathaniel Qualls, a junior psychology major; and Hudson Myers, a junior philosophy and theology major. The campus coordinators are Dr. Perry Hildreth, professor of philosophy, and Dr. Anna Sieges Beal, assistant professor, in the Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy.

Farley said the team began preparing in October 2020. “We were provided with five possible cases that we researched and prepared,” she advised. “We were told which two cases were chosen two days before the event so we could prepare. Normally, we wouldn’t be told until the time of the event, but since the format was not a competition and instead a presentation, they modified this. We practiced heavily with the two cases chosen.”

Both Myers and Qualls said they didn’t like the impersonal nature of the online format. Qualls said he prefers to speak in front of people. “From this experience, I learned the importance of consistency and practice,” he noted. “Our presentation improved the more that we practiced and helped one another.”



Myers also missed being face-to-face with his team members and the other teams. “The point of the event is to discuss ethics, but without being in the same room as the other participants, it seemed less like a discussion,” he observed. “I learned from the event and the preparation that many ethical decisions are based on the veracity of our information; different people will come to divergent answers. But, there are common standards that most agree on which can lead to some certainty in how we ought to act as people.”

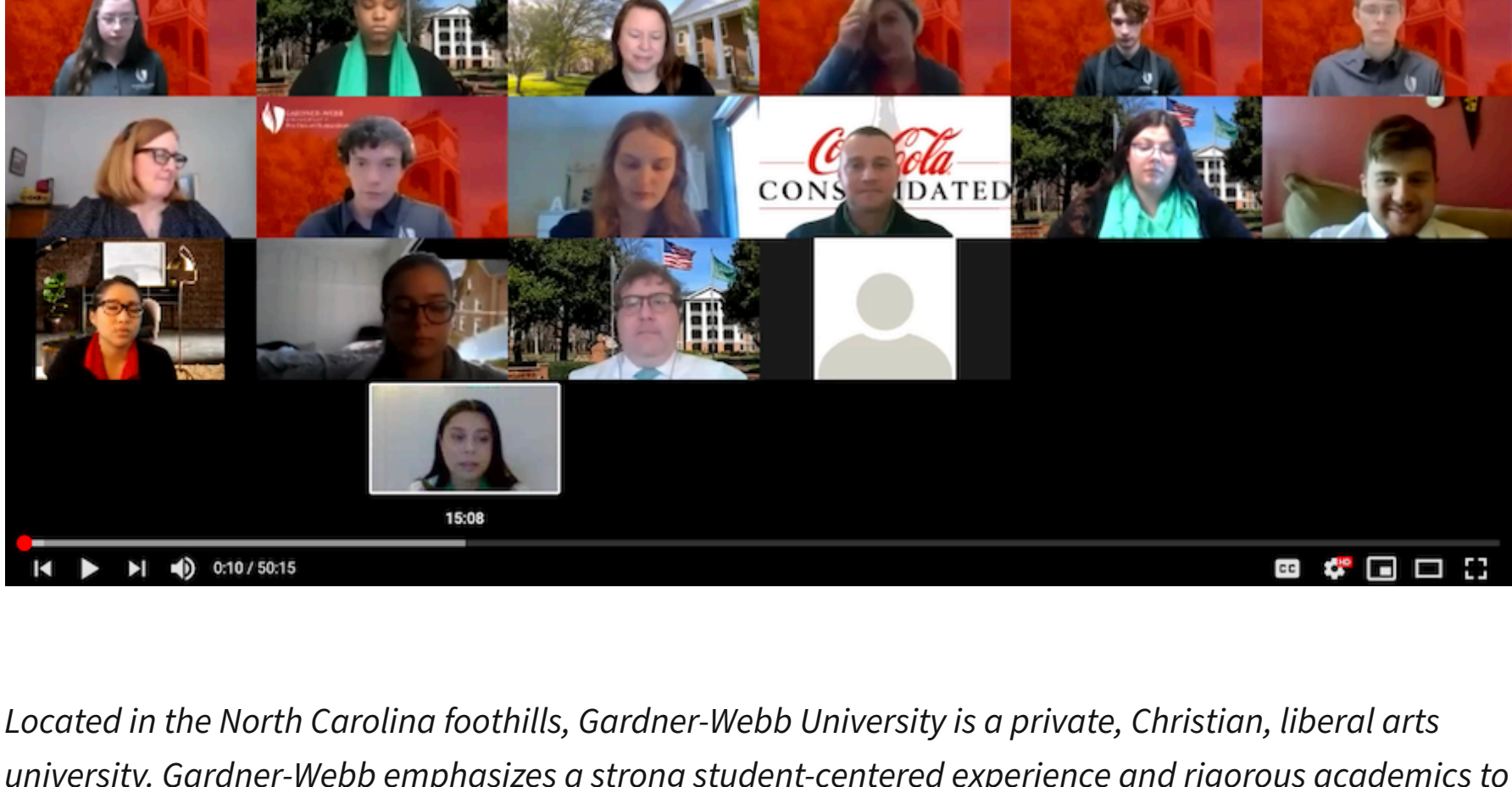
The two topics given to the Gardner-Webb team were: 1. Whether or not it was ethical to enforce limitations on unvaccinated individuals, and 2. The ethical responsibility of local school boards to provide education in the midst of a state of emergency, in this case a pandemic. “Our team decided these cases based on the principles of Humanitarian Ethics (Value of life, principle of goodness, principle of justice, principle of honesty, principle of individual freedom in that order),” Farley shared. “Our team decided that it was ethical to place limitations on unvaccinated individuals because not doing so would violate the principle of life and goodness. These two principles precede individual freedom. Our team also decided that local school boards had the ethical responsibility to provide public education in a state of emergency because failure to do so would violate the principle of life, goodness, and fairness. Many children are dependent on public schools for safety, nourishment, and just the basic right to learn.”

Farley said the feedback they received was positive. “Various people commented on our inclusion of opposing arguments within the defense of our positions,” she elaborated. “I think people appreciated that we didn’t avoid opposing opinions or counter arguments, but addressed them head on.”

Participating in the Ethics Bowl gave Farley confidence that she could defend a position. “My team and I gained experience thinking ‘outside of the box’ to ensure our arguments were strong and thorough,” she stated. “I think it was also helpful to gain experience delivering a defense in front of an audience and to practice overcoming any pressures or anxieties that accompany public presentation. This will be helpful in various aspects of my life in which communication skills, logical defense, public speaking, etc. are necessary.”

Blanton said participating in the Ethics Bowl helped improve his time management skills because of the amount of preparation required to sufficiently argue the case. Hours of practice helped ease the tension of presenting the case online. “This experience advanced my ability to formulate and prepare an argument in a discussion-type setting, while fostering a love for team activities,” Blanton affirmed. “Meanwhile, I also received the opportunity and privilege of cultivating relationships with those on the team that I already knew.”

[View the entire program here.](#) >



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