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ACADEMICS

Gardner-Webb Students Debate Ethics in Democracy and Citizenship in Virtual Ethics Bowl

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON MARCH 11, 2022



▲ The GWU Ethics Bowl Team: (from left) Nathaniel Qualls, Brandon Richmond, Payton Farley, Kolby Craig, Talia Lofton, and Hudson Myers.

North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities Sponsors 11th Annual Event

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—The 11th annual Ethics Bowl sponsored by North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU) was held virtually again this year. The theme for the event was Ethics in Democracy and Citizenship. Gardner-Webb University was one of 13 colleges to participate.

Team members were Nathaniel Qualls, Brandon Richmond, Payton Farley, Kolby Craig, Talia Lofton, and Hudson Myers. The GWU campus coordinators are Professor of Philosophy Perry Hildreth and Assistant Professor of Religious Studies Dr. Anna Sieges-Beal. Because of the virtual format, no overall winner was declared. Judges critiqued the presentations and declared winners in each round. The Gardner-Webb team won a round and lost a round.

“Our students represented us very well in every way!” praised Hildreth. “Dr. Sieges-Beal and I were both very proud of them.”

Team members started preparing and practicing for the event three months ahead of time. They had nine cases to research and get ready to present. They found out which three of the nine cases they would debate on the evening before the Ethics Bowl. The cases they debated were: Whether it is ethical to expand the number of Supreme Court judges; how to ethically amend voting laws; and how to ethically finance political campaigns.

Loftin, a senior psychology major and American Sign Language minor from Clemmons, N.C., joined the team this year, because her roommate enjoyed and learned from being on the team. Loftin said preparing for the event helped to sharpen her critical thinking skills. She and other team members connected with GWU professors to gain insight into the topics. Loftin explained that the team had five minutes to present its case and each member spent about a minute presenting different sections of the team's argument.



▲ Ethics Bowl team members (from left) Nathaniel Qualls, Brandon Richmond, Payton Farley, Kolby Craig, Talia Loftin, and Hudson Myers.

Richmond, a sophomore from Salisbury, is double majoring in English and theology/philosophy with the goal of becoming a writer. This is his first year to participate, and he hopes to be a part of the team in the future. "As a philosophy and theology major, I thought it would be a good experience to discuss ethical topics with others," he observed. "I believed it would give me great insight into how different people think and how ethical problems could be solved. The best part of the experience was gathering together as a group and discussing ethical issues that affect our society and discussing solutions. We often discuss the problems but it was great to talk about solutions."

Qualls, also a senior psychology major, competed on the team last year and said he likes to engage in debate to increase his knowledge on the chosen subjects. "Participating in the Ethics Bowl was an opportunity to work with very talented students and work towards better understanding of current issues," he noted. "I was very proud of the team's participation and performance at the Ethics Bowl. We were all able to maintain a professional demeanor during the debate. I was also proud by the team's ability to communicate our points and arguments as we had practiced."

Farley, a senior biblical studies major and philosophy and ethics minor, also participated in the event last year. "The preparation is the best part of the experience for me," she reflected. "Both last year and this year, I had such fun with my team when we really got on a roll (during practice). We had these moments where we just shot ideas back and forth for half of our meeting and it was such a good time."

The NCICU (<https://ncicu.org/ncicu-ethics-bowl/>) recruits business and government leaders to volunteer as judges and moderators for the matches. Additionally, the Ethics Bowl is made possible by

sponsorships that allow students to participate at no cost to themselves or their institutions. These sponsors have continued to support the Ethics Bowl despite the change in format. The Presenting Sponsor is Truist; Benefactors are Sarah West and Tom Dominick; Associate Sponsors are Duke Energy, McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture, Mount Olive Pickle Co., TIAA, Wren Foundation, A. Hope Williams; and Friends are Cherry Bekaert, Coca-Cola Consolidated, CORT, Fidelity Investments, Gregory Poole, Piedmont Natural Gas, Southern Bank, Wegmans, Melanie Chrisp-Thorpe, Colleen Kinser, and Liz and Stephen Riley.

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