



# ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022

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# 2021-2022 Team Roster

Tailer Benson  
Logan Clarke  
Alex Duus  
Nedoh Gyi  
Brennen Jarcho  
Colton Jensen  
Allie Lamote  
Domonique McPhail  
Bryn Mongeau  
Mackenzie Peterson  
Kristen Neumann  
Kharmen Saysirisanh  
Peter Schrieber  
Sarah Spieker  
Phia Swanson  
Jenna Zeug



These are the students who have engaged with the coaching staff and used team resources to further the goals of SMSU Forensics. As with many organizations, some members are more active than others.





# Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a permanent record of the activities and performances of the SMSU Forensic Team during the 2021-2022 academic year. This report also serves as means of informing others of the program's activities throughout the year. The Forensics program serves SMSU students in a wide variety of ways. Specifically, the program has three developmental goal areas: academic, social, and personal.

Academically, forensic participation is a requirement of students pursuing the Communication Studies and Communication Education majors. Other students desire forensic activities on their transcript to show prospective employers that they have developed and honed their communication skills. Forensic participation provides students with a rich educational



experience that give individuals skills they can use for a lifetime.

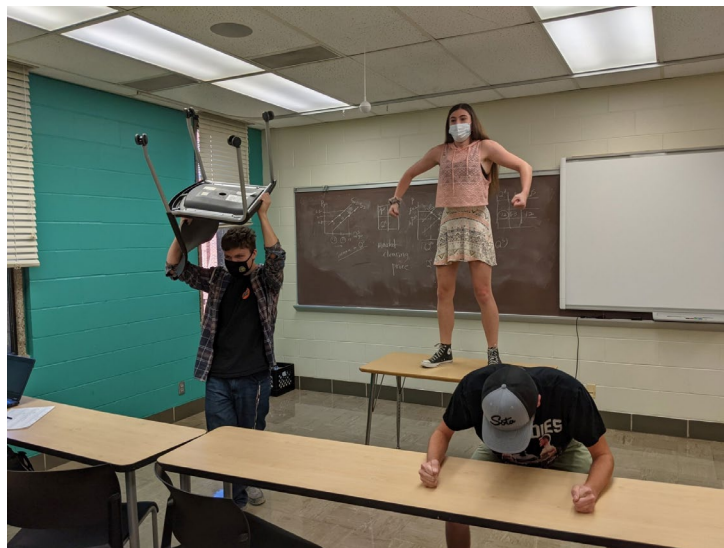
Forensics also fulfills a social function as it is a recognized SMSU student club/organization. Students come together to talk about new literature and/or public speaking topics that they are considering using in competition. They encourage one another for upcoming tournaments or congratulate each other on past tournament performances. Students also engage in community service projects and

participate in local events. The students support each other and form friendships that can last a lifetime. Team members also have an opportunity to polish their leadership skills by serving as officers of the organization. Organizational activities such as holiday parties, fundraisers, high school and collegiate tournaments, community service projects and showcase performances help to fulfill the social function of the Forensics Team.

Personal developmental goals are also fulfilled through Forensic involvement. The poise and confidence gained are irreplaceable, as are the reasoning, listening, researching, and speaking skills one acquires in Forensics. An integration of these areas-academic, social, and personal-is a valuable goal of any club or organization. The SMSU Forensics Team takes pride in knowing that members have the opportunity to make strides in each of these areas.

The Forensics Team has goals, not only in educating the students of SMSU, but also in preparing them for the “real world.” Through the SMSU Forensics program, students:

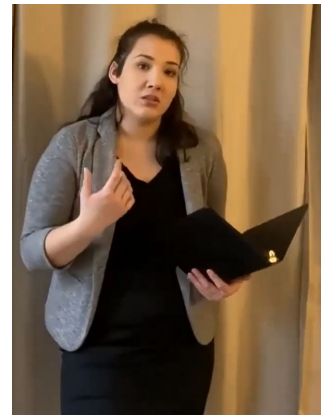
- (1) develop knowledge of logic and reasoning skills.
- (2) learn the skills required to deliver an effective presentation or speech.
- (3) learn to weigh two sides of an argument objectively and sensibly.
- (4) learn to build poise and confidence, especially in front of large groups.
- (5) become exposed to intercollegiate speech and debate tournaments.
- (6) overcome any communication obstacles.
- (7) share with others what they have in common-interest in communication.
- (8) learn to research topics in depth.
- (9) learn to listen critically.
- (10) learn to form personal opinions and logical conclusions more readily.
- (11) increase their efficiency in communication.



Students have the opportunity to become involved in all areas of competitive discourse: Debate, prose, poetry, program oral interpretation, drama, dramatic duo interpretation, persuasive speaking, extemporaneous speaking, impromptu speaking, communication analysis, after-dinner speaking, and informative speaking. Any SMSU student, regardless of previous experience, can take part in forensic activities. Students may receive academic credit.



The forensics program is funded by the Student Activity Fee Allocation Committee (SAFAC). These funds supplement the fundraising done by the team and are used to offset the cost of travel, registration fees, supplies and materials.



## Pandemic Context

This year was a particular challenge, as most tournaments were held online. We only traveled for our State tournament and to the NFA National Championship. Public speaking presents a certain challenge since COVID-19 is spread via particles in the air, so we had to make sure to keep our distance to ensure safe practices. Some tournaments were held synchronously and others asynchronously; sometimes students competed from their own homes/rooms and on a few occasions the team reserved rooms on campus to compete “together”...but still in separate rooms. Often times the competition and practices and team meetings were held via Zoom. While it was a challenge to say the least, the team thrived and had an amazing year!



# Competition Events

**After Dinner Speaking:** An original humorous speech by the student, designed to exhibit sound speech composition, thematic coherence, direct communicative public speaking skills, and good taste. The speech should not resemble a night club act, an impersonation, or a comic monologue. Audio-visual aids may or may not be used to supplement and reinforce the message. Notes are permitted. Maximum time limit is 10 minutes.

**Communication Analysis:** An original speech by the student designed to offer an explanation and/or evaluation of a communication event, such as a speech, speaker, movement, poem, poster, campaign, etc., through the use of theatrical principles. Audio-visual aids may or may not be used to supplement and reinforce the message. Notes are permitted. Maximum time limit is 10 minutes.

**Duo Interpretation:** A cutting from one or more texts of literary merit, humorous or serious, involving the portrayal of two or more characters presented by two individuals. The material may be drawn from any genre of literature. This is not an acting event; thus, no costumes, props, lighting, etc, are to be used. Presentation is from the manuscript and the focus should be off-stage and not to each other. Maximum time limit is 10 minutes including introduction.

**Dramatic Interpretation:** A cutting that represents one or more characters from a play or plays of literary merit. The focus of this event is on the development of characterization. This material may be drawn from stage, screen or radio. Use of manuscript is required. Maximum time limit is 10 minutes including introduction.

**Extemporaneous Speaking:** Contestants will be given three topics in the general area of current events, will choose one, and will have 30 minutes to prepare a speech. Maximum time limit for the speech is 7 minutes. Notes are permitted. Students will speak in listed order. Posting of topics will be staggered.

**Impromptu Speaking:** An impromptu speech, serious in nature, with topic selection varied round by round, section by section. Topics will be of a proverb nature. Speakers will have a total of 7 minutes and may use the time at their own discretion. Notes are permitted. Each speaker in a given section will have the same topic.

**Informative Speaking:** An original, factual speech by the student on a realistic subject to fulfill the general aim to inform the audience. Visuals may or may not be used to supplement and reinforce the message. Multiple sources should be used and cited in the development of the speech. Notes are permitted. Maximum time limit is 10 minutes.

**Parliamentary Debate:** Parliamentary Debate is a formal contest of advocacy which theoretically occurs in a House of Parliament. Participants are the Government and Opposition teams, and the moderator is Madam or Mister Speaker of the House. A motion or resolution is a sentence or phrase which provides the subject of debate. The Government Team has a limited amount of time, usually fifteen minutes, to prepare a case centered around this topic. Published materials, or other resources for the debater's use in the round, may not be brought into the debating chambers.

**Persuasive Speaking:** An original speech by the student designed to inspire, reinforce, or change the beliefs, attitudes, values, or actions of the audience. Multiple sources should be used and cited in the development of the speech. Notes are permitted. Maximum time limit is 10 minutes.

**Poetry Interpretation:** A selection or selections of poetry of literary merit, which may be drawn from more than one source. A primary focus of this event should be on the development of language. Play cuttings and prose works are prohibited. Use of manuscript is required. Maximum time limit is 10 minutes including introduction.

**Program Oral Interpretation:** A program of thematically-linked selections of literary merit, chosen from two or three recognized genres of competitive interpretation (prose/poetry/drama). A primary focus of this event should be on the development of the theme through the use of narrative/story, language, and/or characterization. A substantial portion of the total time must be devoted to each of the genres used in the program. Different genre means the material must appear in separate pieces of literature (e.g., A poem included in a short story that appears only in that short story does not constitute a poetry genre). Only one selection may be original. Use of manuscript is required. Maximum time limit is 10 minutes including introduction.

**Prose Interpretation:** An original or selections of prose material of literary merit, which may be drawn from more than one source. Focus of this event is on the development of the narrative/story. Play cuttings and poetry are prohibited. Use of manuscript is required. Maximum time is 10 minutes including introduction.



# Coaches

The forensic team is coached and managed by the Director of Forensics, Ben Walker and Assistant Director of Forensics, Julie Walker. This was Professor Ben Walker's 6<sup>th</sup> year as Director of Forensics. This was also Professor Julie Walker's 6<sup>th</sup> year as the full-time ADOF. Both Professor Ben Walker and Professor Julie Walker are full-time faculty members within the Communication Studies Program. As coaches, they work with students individually to prepare for intercollegiate competitions and travel with the team to contests. While at contests, in addition to supervising students on the team, they serve as adjudicators of competitors from other schools. The coaching staff is also responsible for managing the travel arrangements of the team, accounts, team activities, hosting tournaments, fundraisers and the co-curricular aspects of the team.



# Season Highlights

The competitive season for college speech runs the entire academic year, with competitions starting in early October and finishing in March. SMSU Forensics had *another* fantastic year. Here are some of the competitive highlights from the season:

- **At the Minnesota State Championship (@ the UofM)...**
  - Senior Devyn Halvorson takes 2<sup>nd</sup> in Communication Analysis, 2<sup>nd</sup> in Duo Interpretation, and 1<sup>st</sup> in After Dinner Speaking
  - Junior Jenna Zeug takes 3<sup>rd</sup> in Persuasion and 2<sup>nd</sup> in POI
  - Senior Kristen Neumann takes 2<sup>nd</sup> in Duo Interpretation and 4<sup>th</sup> in Informative Speaking
  - SMSU Forensics places 4<sup>th</sup> in the entire State of Minnesota and WINS the Limited Entry State Championship!
- **At the International Forensics Association tournament...**
  - Devyn Halvorson and Kristen Neumann took 6<sup>th</sup> in Duo Interpretation
- **At the National Speech Championship...**
  - Jenna Zeug was a Quarter-Finalist in Persuasive Speaking, a Quarter-Finalist in Prose Interpretation, and a Semi-Finalist in POI
  - Freshman Nedoh Gyi was a Semi-Finalist in Prose Interpretation and made Novice Showcase in Persuasive Speaking
  - Junior Sarah Spieker was a Quarter-Finalist in Poetry Interpretation, and a Semi-Finalist in Communication Analysis
  - Kristen Neumann was a Semi-Finalist in Duo Interpretation
  - Devyn Halvorson was a Semi-Finalist in Communication Analysis, a Semi-Finalist in Duo Interpretation, and took 4<sup>th</sup> place in After Dinner Speaking
  - SMSU Forensics places 9<sup>th</sup> in the entire Nation!
- **At the Asynchronous Speech Championship...**
  - Jenna Zeug was a Quarter-Finalist in Prose Interpretation, and a Quarter-Finalist in Persuasive Speaking
  - Devyn Halvorson was a Semi-Finalist in After Dinner Speaking
  - SMSU Forensics places 5<sup>th</sup> in the River Division Team Sweepstakes
- **At the National Forensics Association Championship (@Illinois State University)...**
  - Devyn Halvorson was a Octo-Finalist in After Dinner Speaking



# Campus and Community Events

This year, beyond the many different tournaments the students competed in across two semesters and the activity fairs, team meetings, and parties attended, forensics also organized and/or participated in the following events:

- **Mustang Stampede (10/12-10/16)**

We hosted our annual Mustang Stampede, but held it online this year. We normally partner with the Mavericks of MSU, Mankato to host one of the premier fall speech weekends in the region. The benefits are clear: we serve the community looking for another tournament, and SMSU Forensics becomes associated with a prestigious tournament weekend in Mankato. This year, we launched an online speech model that was duplicated across the country: hosting an asynchronous tournament during the week and a synchronous tournament on the weekend.

- **Undergraduate Research Conference (12/1)**

We had several team members present at the URC for a variety of classes, but four of them presented their work from the team:

Alex Duus

*Panic and Anxiety: A Poetry Program*

Jenna Zeug

*Humanity, Liminality, and Ghosts: An Oral Interpretation of "Haunt" by Carmen Maria Machado*

Devyn Halvorson

*Repurposing the Spectacle: A Debordian Analysis of "L'Après M"*

Domonique McPhail

*Drama/Drama: A Performative Comparison of Sean Grennan's "The Tin Woman"*



- **High School Tournament (3/12)**

We hosted our annual High School Speech tournament on campus for the first time in a couple of years. As always it was an excellent recruiting opportunity and students had a positive experience. We even had a student get to dress up as Stanger and take pictures with the high school students!

- **Queer Prom (4/2)**

We co-sponsored the Queer Prom held by the LGBTQ+ Club. It was an event to help students and community members experience a "prom" that was friendly and safe for LGBTQ+ individuals. Forensics contributed funds to make the event possible.

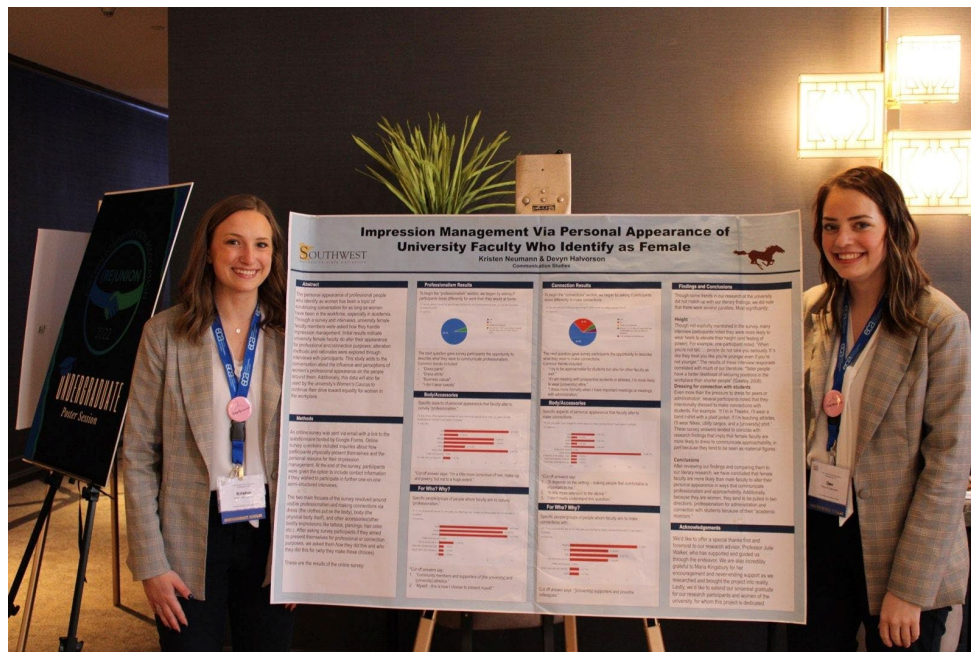


- **Section Contest (4/9)**

We hosted the annual 3A Section Speech Contest for local schools where high school students qualify to compete at the State speech tournament. Again, this was the first time we've been able to host it in a couple of years. It went smoothly and it was a positive experience for area teachers and students.

- **Students Present at the Eastern Communication Association Conference (4/7-4/9)**

Two team members got some of their research accepted to present in Philadelphia at the Eastern Communication Association conference. This was an honor but also an expensive trip for college students. Forensics contributed funds to help them afford the trip.





## Additional Accolades

- During her successful career in speech, Devyn Halvorson caught the eye of several coaches across the country. After taking some meetings with coaches, Devyn was offered and accepted an assistantship to coach and teach while attending graduate school in Communication Studies at the University of Nebraska-Omaha! Devyn will finish her degree at SMSU in December of 2022 and begin her studies at UNO in January of 2023!



- Assistant Director of Forensics Julie Walker was honored with several awards this year for service in guiding the activity through a tough time of online competition. Julie continued to host the nationally acclaimed Online Asynchronous Tournament Series (OATS) and then along with Director of Forensics Ben Walker, created the Asynchronous Speech Championship (ASC): the first national asynchronous speech tournament. For her efforts Julie was awarded the National Service Award at the National Speech Championship for the second year in a row! Additionally, Julie was elected to be the next Secretary for the National Forensics Association, placing her on the National Committee!

