

The logo for the University of the Cumberland, featuring the text "UNIVERSITY of the CUMBERLANDS" in a serif font, with "of the" in a smaller, italicized font.The text "Debate Team" in a sans-serif font, positioned to the right of a vertical line.

And the Award Goes To.." Award Ceremonies in a Time of Social Distancing

Jay Bourne, Director of Forensics, University of the Cumberland

"People often ask when things will return to normal, said T. Christopher Bond, an associate director at Bristol Myers Squibb. "At first I told them: 'The world has changed and will be different for a long time. This is the crisis of our lifetime and we need to embrace it,'" he said. "But that depressed them. So now I say, 'Well, we know more every day.'"

https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/08/upshot/when-epidemiologists-will-do-everyday-things-coronavirus.html?fbclid=IwAR3Ad_PHFtFHuy7LA6VHxRR8TOXKKhBMoCZqhKWday6HnZG5AWPw3zLv2KA

This virus is novel, new, and we are discovering more about it every day. There are numerous moving parts and elements to in person tournaments. Yet among them, perhaps none appear more complicated currently than opening ceremonies and award ceremonies. The easiest thing to do regarding opening ceremonies would be to eliminate them currently, and offer needed info online to participants, coaches and judges.

Awards ceremonies are significant for teams and competitors, and in an age of increasing pressure of team budgets, one of the metrics (rightly or wrongly) used to evaluate program success. With that in mind here is a phased view of how award ceremonies might work in the future at speech and debate tournaments.

Additional disclaimers. I am not an epidemiologist. I also do not play one on TV. And our understanding of social behavior is changing (see: masks). So I am not offering medical advice, just giving a "lay of the land" as I see it currently. As with everything, the community will over time evolve into using best practices.

Phase 1- Virtual (online only)

Zoom/teams/google/ facebook live award ceremonies so not only teams but parents, relatives, others can view live

Certificates designed and shared via email/box, etc

Awards mailed (example of climb the mountain- online tourneys)

Charity tournaments (donate to specific charity/ or choices)

General in person guidelines

If on campus at any capacity for a tournament, it is assumed that recommended guidelines will be followed. Award ceremonies would be particularly risky, since it involves potentially a large amount of people in a contained area that may be crowded, not especially well ventilated, and at greater risk of encountering super spreading. Recent research indicates 80% of the virus may be spread by 20% of the people that have covid and that super spreader events (church meetings, concerts, sporting events) are more of a high risk situation than others.

<https://theconversation.com/a-few-superspreaders-transmit-the-majority-of-coronavirus-cases-139950?fbclid=IwAR2vgTWC44Iv7neIPgxM3APjd0oWxm889iWd A- k 1KxOwcSmo0dezI4Cw>

Currently, general guidelines would not be limited to, but would include

Procedures/ notifications for people that have symptoms at or during the tournament (likely state guidelines/ university procedures) People that feel ill should not attend

Temp testing

wearing of masks

Proper social distancing

no hand shaking or group hugs*

*Forty-two percent of the sample (over 500 epidemiologists) said they would not hug or shake hands for more than a year, and 6 percent said they would never do either again.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/08/upshot/when-epidemiologists-will-do-everyday-things-coronavirus.html?fbclid=IwAR3Ad PHFtFHuy7LA6VHxRR8TOXKKhBMoCZqhKWday6HnZG5AWPw3zLv2KA>

use a public address system or have more than normal distancing for announcer (loud talking = increased risk)

"...at this juncture, we don't want people doing voice lessons, even standing eight-and-a-half feet apart," William Schaffner, professor of infectious diseases at Vanderbilt University Medical Center From: [Speech and singing might spray the coronavirus further than 6 feet. Here's what that means for loud talkers.](#) Business Insider April 8, 2020

Phase 2 (Partial) In person but no large groups (<10-15 room)

Virtual award ceremony streamed live

Teams can view the ceremony from classrooms nearby, one classroom per team (similar to debate prep rooms)

Awards for pickup in a central room for limited people

(either staff bring to door, or one representative comes in room to collect their haul)

For debate, awards can be given out throughout the tournament. Awards available in room for eliminated debate competitors/ teams after competition round (send awards with judges when they pick up ballots)

Phase 3 (Medium) 15 to 40 people can have ceremony, but not for everyone, so limiting options include ceremonies viewed in separate classrooms (1 per team) while award ceremony is

limited to finalists

limited to flight event pattern

limited to event category (interp, public address, debate, etc)

keep ceremony brief (increased time = increased risk)

no direct handing on trophies to competitor but having them pick up the trophy themselves from the table

reconsider "stage and wings" format depending on room layout

rethink procedures for categories with large outround participants

(debate divisions with more than a quarterfinal round, or events that often go to semis like impromptu and extemp, and esp duo) Perhaps just recognize name at ceremony and include certificates in the packets

Phase 4 (Open) no set restrictions

At this point (not anytime soon) all competitors can attend

Use Phase 3 procedures for giving trophies, coordinating movement of participants, handling events with larger number of trophies to award

Promote social distancing with roping off areas. If teams are in attendance, consider allowing teams to be seated together, or by their vans if large group

Warn about loud yelling or shouting (see previous info about loud talkers)

Assign team members to serve as ushers to have orderly crowd movement

Avoid having a shared meal as part of the award ceremony, or communal snack areas for competitors