



Team Handbook
&
Policies
2018-2019

Welcome to the Mustang Forensic Program! By choosing to participate with this program you are joining a group of impressive SMSU students and alumni. Your involvement with competitive forensics has the potential to be one of the most defining experiences of your university career. This handbook is intended to help you familiarize yourself with the program's history, policies and procedures.

Program History

The Southwest Minnesota State University forensic program began in the 1968-1969 school year when a group of students formed the school's first speech and debate team. Mustang Forensics is the oldest student organization on the SMSU campus. The longevity of the program is a testament to the presence of strong institutional support as well as decades of influential program leadership.

Mustang Forensics has been primarily led by three Directors: Prof. Bob Ridley (1969-1993), Prof. Marian Ridley, (1993-1995) and Prof. Mark Fokken (1995-2016). We have had 2 AFA All-Americans: Veronica Fischer (2011) and Nick Dorman (2015) as well as State and National finalists and champions. Most recently in the 2017-2018 season, Crystal Enga placed 6th in Informative Speaking and Kristen Barnhardt placed 1st in After Dinner Speaking at the Minnesota Collegiate Forensic Association State Tournament.

Members of the Mustang Forensic program should be exceptionally proud of being part of a forensic team that not only strives for competitive excellence, but embraces the educational aspect of the activity. We encourage laughter, hard work, and risk-taking in performances. Dream big. Think big. Speak and be heard.

Diversity Pledge

The SMSU Forensics Team is firmly committed to an environment of equality and inclusion for the diverse members of the SMSU student body. Diversity refers to many characteristics including, but not limited to "race, sex, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, disability, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression."¹ While team member experiences vary, all team members and coaches are expected to treat one another with respect at all times. We recognize discrimination may be direct, indirect, systemic, or individual. All team members and coaches must commit to supporting and understanding one another to create an environment of acceptance and safety for all members to flourish in their team participation. Discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated.

¹Language taken from the SMSU Discrimination/Harassment policy available in full at <https://www.smsu.edu/administration/studenthandbook/policies/discrimination-harassment.html>

Program Philosophy and Policies

Participation with the Mustang Forensic Program involves an agreement to uphold the program's philosophy and also adhere to the program's policies.

Our program philosophy is built on the concept of **respect**.

Mission Statement:

Through the practice of competitive speaking, the Southwest Minnesota State University Forensic Program strives to develop in all participants a sense of respect for self, team and community.

Respect for self is expected through the following values and policies:

1. Participants will value academic excellence.
 - a. Participants are expected to maintain a GPA of 3.0 in order to travel without restriction. Participants with a GPA below a 2.75 will not be allowed to travel.
 - b. Participants are expected to be making timely progress toward the completion of a degree.
 - c. Participants will adhere to the University "[Make-Up Work and Missed Classes](#)" policy
 - d. Participants grant the DOF permission to review their academic records to verify satisfactory performance.
 - e. Participants are encouraged to participate in activities which will prepare them for future employment or post-graduate studies.
2. Participants will value high tournament performance standards.
 - a. Participants are expected to participate in weekly coaching sessions.
 - b. Participants should strive to not perform un-memorized events in competition. Students attending their first ever college tournament may be granted an exemption.
 - c. Participants are expected to always perform to the best of their ability when coaching and in competition.
 - d. Participants are expected to challenge themselves and always be improving their skills.
3. Participants will value ethical standards in competition.
 - a. Participants will adhere to the AFA Code of Standards. <https://sites.google.com/site/afanietnew2/products-services/afa-code-of-standards>
 - b. Participants are expected to be models of ethical practice.
4. Participants will value a healthy lifestyle
 - a. Underage drinking is NEVER permitted at team functions or while traveling to tournaments. Additionally, no participants may bring alcohol into a team vehicle or lodging. Participants who are 21 years of age should never drink to excess (blood alcohol concentration above .08%). No participant should consume alcohol prior to departure to or from a tournament.
 - b. Smoking is not allowed in team vehicles or lodgings.
 - c. Participants will never use or possess illegal drugs of any kind.

- d. Any participant caught breaking a law while attending a team function will be immediately “dropped” from the event and responsible for his/her own legal fees and transportation home.
- e. When traveling, or at overnight team functions, participants will adhere to the curfew established by the coach in charge. You must remain on the grounds of the tournament or hotel site unless you get permission from a coach.
- f. Participants are expected to be committed to travel safety which includes wearing one’s seatbelt at all times, driving the posted speed limit, and not driving while sleepy. The person riding “shot-gun” should keep the driver alert.
- g. Participants are encouraged to develop effective time management skills through which to balance responsibilities.

Respect for team is expected through the following values and policies:

1. Participants will value the good of the team over the good of the individual.
 - a. Participants are expected to defer to the decisions of the coaching staff regarding the well-being of the team.
 - b. Participants will recognize their individual successes and failures are secondary to the overall health and success of the team.
 - c. Participants are expected to attend weekly team meetings unless they have a class conflict.
 - d. Participants are expected to willingly participate in team warm-ups and meetings while attending tournaments.
 - e. Participants will be on time for all team departures. If you are late you will be left and responsible for getting yourself to the tournament or paying your drop fees.
2. Participants will value a harmonious social team dynamic.
 - a. Participants are expected to adhere to the University Nondiscrimination Policy
 - b. Participants are expected to treat other team members with kindness and civility. This involves an active effort to maintain a harmonious environment.
 - c. Participants are expected to maintain a forgiving, rather than judging attitude when conflicts occur.
 - d. Participants are encouraged to address their own idiosyncrasies and work to overlook the idiosyncrasies of others.
 - e. Participants are not expected to socialize outside of formal team functions, and should not be pressured to do so.
3. Participants will value the educational aspects of the activity.
 - a. Participants will familiarize themselves with the pedagogical goals of forensic events as explained in the NFA Pedagogy Report:
<http://www.collegeforensics.org/pdf/NFA%20Pedagogy%20Report-2010.pdf?PHPSESSID=1bff1cb2f62e41a32aea9c81efcfd70b>
 - b. Participants are expected to partake in ongoing reflections on their learning experiences.

Respect for community is expected through the following values and policies:

1. Participants will value the campus community
 - a. Participants are expected to be gracious recipients of all funding.
 - b. Participants are expected to assist with team service projects.
 - c. Participants are expected to always represent the university in a positive way.
 - d. The forensics lab (CH112) is a public space to be used by any *active* forensic program member. Use of the room includes maintaining a clean and uncluttered environment, as well as appropriate use of technology resources.
 - e. Participants should respect faculty and staff working in forensics lab (CH112) and the surrounding areas. Participants may not use the printer/copier in CH112 without permission from the DOF and should vacate the room if needed by faculty or staff.

2. Participants will value the forensic community
 - a. Participants will appreciate the interdependence and worth of all forensic programs.
 - b. Participants are expected to treat members of other teams with kindness and civility.
 - c. Participants are expected to assist with all tournaments and workshops we host on campus.
 - d. Participants are encouraged to be ambassadors for forensics in other areas of their lives.
 - e. Participants will demonstrate professional behavior at all times. This includes but is not limited to: positive attitude towards finals postings, no discussion of competitors while at the tournament site, and courteous listening behavior during your rounds. Remember during your rounds, the judge is the ultimate authority, so follow his or her directions. Always be polite when asking to be excused to leave for another event or at the end of the round.

3. Participants will value their local, national and global communities
 - a. Participants are expected to participate in all community service projects organized and sponsored by the team.
 - b. Participants are encouraged to stay informed regarding local, national and international current events.
 - c. Participants are encouraged to use their performance skills to improve the lives of others.

Note: Should they choose to do so, participants may pay for their own room at the hotel in which the team is staying. Participants may also drive personal vehicles at their own expense with prior approval from the DOF.

Team Practices/Meetings

Attendance at Team Meetings is mandatory unless the student has class. Team Meetings are used for informational purposes as well as team bonding and learning about speech and debate. Team Practices will occur periodically. Each student should attend at least one Team Practices every month in addition to all Team Meetings and Individual Coaching. Failure to attend Meetings and Practices may result in removal of scholarships and suspension of travel and coaching.

Team Tournaments

Each member of SMSU Forensics should work toward their individual goals and the team goals. To that end, each member is required to compete at/prepare for the following tournaments during the season:

- Larry Schnoor Invitational/Mustang Stampede
- MCFA State Tournament

Students should plan to be at these tournaments and are encouraged to compete in more tournaments throughout the season. Coaches will determine if students are ready to compete. Failure to attend these tournaments may result in removal of scholarships and suspension of travel and coaching.

Nationals

While the Minnesota State Tournament is our main competitive focus, many students wish to qualify and compete at Nationals. There are two national tournaments SMSU attends:

- AFA-NIET (to qualify an event, you must final at least 3 times and your total rankings from those finals must be 8 or lower)
- Interstate Oratory (must have the top 2 Persuasion speech at State tournament)

Agreement

Please visit the link on D2L to finish reading the rest of the team policies and to officially agree to the policies and guidelines of SMSU Forensics.