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GSU Launches Forensics Team

There is just no debating it. Students who join the new Forensics Team at [Governors State University](#) won't only polish their speaking skills, they'll also join a tight-knit community as they compete with students across Illinois—including each other.



GSU is launching its Forensics Team with the start of the fall semester. Students can learn more about it and other student organizations during Welcome Week Aug. 26-31.

Forensics, or speech and debate, requires creativity to draft and deliver presentations, which may include poetry, persuasive argument, or other work. But it takes turning it into a competition for students to get the support of a team, said Professor [Jason Zingsheim](#), Division Chair for [Arts and Letters](#).

“It’s like track and field because everyone competes individually and also as a team,” he said. “Someone from GSU who competes in poetry, for instance, will go up against students from other schools competing in poetry, maybe even someone else from GSU. Whoever gets the highest score goes on.”

The team effort comes into play as students refine their work between competitions, which could occur monthly, he said. “You get feedback and continue to work on it,” Zingsheim said. “That refines your ability to communicate effectively verbally.”

And travelling to competitions brings the same bonding experience for forensics team members as it does for student athletes, one reason the friendships tend to be strong and last well beyond graduation, he said.

The idea for GSU’s team came from the top: President Elaine P. Maimon. Zingsheim worked to develop it with [Lara Stache](#), Assistant Professor of [Communication Studies](#), Corey Williams, AVP of [Student Affairs](#) and Dean of Students and Andrae Marak, [Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences](#) and Graduate Studies also lent enthusiastic support.

Their passion was met with practical advice from [Dual Degree Partner](#) Moraine Valley Community College (MVCC) . According to John Nash, MVCC’s director of Forensics, “GSU’s team would be attractive to potential transfer students who want to continue their debate team experience,” Zingsheim said.

The key to a successful start for GSU is that Eddie Gamboa will join the communication faculty in August. Gamboa brings more than eight years of experience in college-level debate as a forensics coach and administrator. He also helped develop a national tournament dedicated to creating equal opportunities for schools regardless of funding or institutional support. In 2018, Gamboa was named the Outstanding New Coach at the American Forensic Association National Individual Events Tournament.

“Forensics provides an incredible chance for students to explore topics that are important to them, and it is exciting to watch a university invest in such an opportunity for its students,” said Stache.

She said the unique benefit to students is that forensics is both a social and academic team.

“The speaking and presentation skills learned will benefit students in the classroom and in their future careers,” she said, “but the friendships they will make with teammates and competitors at competitions will last a lifetime.”

An information session is planned for Sept. 23 at 5 p.m. in E2543.