

University of Oregon Speech, Debate, and Mock Trial Program Shuttered After Nearly 150 Years of Excellence

Eugene, Oregon Sep 18, 2025 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - After nearly 150 years of shaping leaders, innovators, and public servants, the University of Oregon has announced the cancellation of its historic speech, debate, and mock trial program (officially the Forensics Program). Alumni and students are deeply concerned and are coming together to explore ways to ensure the program's future.

One of the first groups formed on the University of Oregon campus, Forensics has been one of the nation's most enduring platforms for debate, speech, and mock trial—serving thousands of students and earning national recognition, including **six national championships**. From hosting landmark tournaments such as the David Frank Tournament of Scholars, the Robert D. Clark Invitational, and the David Frohnmayer Invitational, to producing alumni who have gone on to lead in courts, boardrooms, and legislatures, the program's impact has been profound. In the late 1890s, the program even held popular public debates to help fund the original Ducks football team.

The cancellation is especially difficult for the current students and staff, who had been preparing for the Fall competition season. Alumni and supporters hope to work with the University to find a sustainable path forward.

"Forensics is a gateway to further education and successful careers, which is what a university should deem as top priority," said Shelby Malstrom, a 2012 UO and Forensics alumni. "We ask that you maintain the program through the fall, which has virtually no associated cost, and that you help us find a permanent home within the university."

The University's suggestion that Forensics operate as a student club under the ASUO is neither practical now nor sustainable long term. The abrupt decision makes recognition and funding impossible in time for this year's competition season, and the club model cannot provide the professional leadership, staffing, and stability needed for national success. The result would be lost travel opportunities, no ORCS or Nationals for mock trial, restricted competition to nearby events, and the absence of professional educators who help students achieve the full educational benefits of forensics. Unlike forensics, most ASUO clubs travel only a few times a year—a structure wholly incompatible with a program that has been a cornerstone of the University for nearly 150 years.

Media Contact

Oregon Forensics Alumni Network

*****@oregonforensics.com

Source : Oregon Forensics Alumni Network

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