

Bickel & Brewer and New York University
Crown Debate Champion,
Announce New and Improved Competition
By
Melissa Maxcy Wade



Bickel & Brewer Partners John Bickel (left) and William Brewer (far right) present the Bellaire High School debate team with the \$10,000 NPPF grand prize.

Entering into the final round of the Bickel & Brewer / New York University National Public Policy Forum (NPPF) this past April, the Bellaire High School debate team was optimistic. It was the team's fifth year to participate in the final round of the competition in New York City, and the students had spent the last five months preparing for this moment. But the students knew the finals would be challenging.

"Developing strategies to debate against the other exceptional teams in the finals was hard," says Russell Rach, debate coach at Bellaire High School, located outside of Houston, Texas. "There are some really talented debaters who play this game with well-developed and well researched arguments, and developing winning strategies against those arguments takes a lot of reading and research. Our team couldn't just throw a fistful of generic arguments at the affirmative and win in this format. They had to do specific research for each finals round."

Bellaire bested its competitors at the finals and was named the 2008-2009 NPPF Champion. In doing so, it captured a unique title – Bellaire is the only school that has ever been named back-to-back

winner of the NPPF competition. It will also be the last “NPPF” winner, as this unique competition now becomes the “International Public Policy Forum,” or IPPF.

“For the past eight years, this competition has primarily involved debaters from the United States,” says William A. Brewer III, partner at Bickel & Brewer and founder of the IPPF. “However, the contest has received extraordinary interest internationally. As such, the Advisory Board has decided to expand the competition to include teams from across the globe. In 2009-10, we are encouraging students from all over the world to participate in this exciting competition.”

The IPPF is the only contest that gives students the opportunity to participate in written and oral debates on issues of public policy. The competition began eight years ago with fewer than 30 schools, but it has grown exponentially. Students are drawn by the opportunity to compete in written and oral debate, and welcome the challenge of competing against some of the best debaters in the United States – and across the world. The 2009-10 competition expects to involve thousands of debaters representing 35 countries. As always, the contest is free and open to public and private schools.

The competition begins in October. Students must submit an affirmative or negative qualifying round case on the topic, *“Resolved: The United Nations should substantially increase humanitarian assistance for persons living in poverty.”* The cases are judged by an IPPF Review Committee comprised of scholars, debate coaches and business professionals.

Regional winners are named and awarded NFL points and awards. The top 32 schools advance to the Written Elimination Rounds and engage in a single-elimination written debate

tournament. One team is assigned the affirmative and the other assigned the negative of the topic resolution. The schools volley written cases via e-mail, and judges review the papers in the order in which they are presented. Winning schools advance to the next round. This process continues for several rounds until the final eight schools emerge. Those eight teams earn an all-expenses-paid trip to New York University to compete in the IPPF Weekend Finals.

The offer for eight teams to visit New York is a recent change. The contest used to invite only the final four teams to participate in Finals Weekend. During the finals, students have the opportunity to supplement their written scholarship with oral advocacy. They utilize research and oral advocacy skills to present their positions before a panel of judges that includes some of the world’s foremost experts in law, business, debate and politics.

David Huston, IPPF Advisory Board member and debate coach at Colleyville Heritage High School, believes the finals format is what makes the IPPF such a great opportunity for debaters.

“The finals format is one of the most exciting forums in debate today,” Huston says. “I urge debate

coaches to make this contest a part of their competition schedule, if only for the opportunity to introduce their students to a different type of debate. As coaches, we owe our students the opportunity to engage in different debate formats – so they will be well rounded and prepared for college and beyond.”

Rach says the IPPF is unlike any other contest taking place in debate today. He describes the competition as a marathon, inviting students to develop strong arguments over an expanded period of time. The focus on written scholarship and oral argumentation make the IPPF the ultimate test of research, academic discipline and advocacy.

“Coaches who enjoy the depth and complexity of ideas in policy debate will love the IPPF format,” Rach says. “They will enjoy the ease of participation in terms of reduced jargon and nomenclature. The essay format is an equalizer that allows really smart kids who do not necessarily speak policy debate-ese to participate and shine.”

The IPPF is fully endorsed by the National Forensic League, National Association for Urban Debate Leagues, National Debate Project, and International Debate Education Association.



Plano Senior High School was named the runner-up in the 2008-09 competition

Registration for the 2009-2010 competition has already begun. Make this the year your team takes on the world.

Exciting changes for the 2009-2010 IPPF Competition:

1. Students compete for more than \$100,000 in cash, prizes and travel expenses.
2. Eight teams are awarded an all-expenses-paid trip to the April 16-18, 2010, finals on the NYU campus in New York City.
3. Those eight teams participate in oral debates until the final two teams emerge. The winning team takes home the \$10,000 grand prize and the coveted "Bickel & Brewer Cup."

How to participate in the 2009-2010 IPPF competition:

1. Work with your debate coach or English teacher to put your team together.

Visit www.bickelbrewer.com/debate and register your team by October 15, 2009.

2. Prepare a qualifying round case on the 2009-2010 IPPF topic, *"Resolved: The United Nations should substantially increase humanitarian assistance for persons living in poverty."*

Cases are limited to 2,800 words and may be written from an affirmative or negative perspective. Participating teams may be comprised of any number of students. Only one case is allowed per high school. Visit www.bickelbrewer.com/debate for information and case examples.

Submit your case by 2 p.m. CST on October 28, 2009, to Sarah Marshala at sem@bickelbrewer.com, or for more information call 214-653-4035.

3. Cases will be reviewed by a panel of judges. The top 32 teams will be announced at www.bickelbrewer.com/debate on November 4, 2009. The top 32 teams earn cash awards and NFL points, and advance to the elimination rounds. They continue their contest participation in a

written debate tournament. Individual matches begin immediately via the Internet, with one school affirming the resolution and the other negating it.

The cases are again reviewed by a panel of judges, and winning teams advance to the next round. This process continues until the final eight teams emerge.

4. Pack your bags! The final eight teams earn an all-expense-paid trip to the April 16-18, 2010,

finals at NYU. Three students and two coaches per school have the opportunity to attend. Students participate in a written and oral debate competition before a panel of some of the world's foremost experts in debate, business, law and politics. The winning team claims a \$10,000 grand prize (\$5,000 for the school and \$5,000 for team members) and the "Bickel & Brewer Cup." The other teams also receive awards and cash prizes at a special banquet and awards ceremony.

About the author:

Melissa Maxcy Wade is an IPPF Advisory Board member. She is Executive Director of Forensics and Faculty Member in the Division of Educational Studies at Emory University, and Executive Co-Director of the National Debate Project.



Judges Elaine McArdle, journalist and writer, and Mark Oppenheimer, editor of the New Haven Review and a former coach of the Yale Debate Association, question the students during the final round of competition



Plano Senior High School debater Gursimran Singh answers questions from the judges during the final round of the 2008-09 NPPF.



Debaters from Glenbrook North High School, Northbrook, IL, prepare for the NPPF semi-finals in New York