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JW Patterson Debates Hosted by the University of Kentucky

Lexington, KY – The University of Kentucky hosted the 55th annual JW Patterson Debates on the weekend of September 27-29, 2025. The tournament was attended by 127 entries in the open division, 21 entries in the Wildcat division, and 17 entries in the novice division.

Debaters from across the country were asked to debate both sides of the season-long resolution about labor policy. The full wording of the topic is “Resolved: The United States Federal Government should substantially strengthen collective bargaining rights for workers in the United States.”

Students participating at the tournament debate half of their preliminary debates in favor of the resolution and half of their preliminary debates in opposition to the resolution.

At the conclusion of the preliminary debates, the tournament seeded teams in all divisions based on their win-loss record and speaker points. Elimination debates are single-elimination for the top 32 teams in open, 10 teams in Wildcat, and 8 teams in novice.

The novice division features students who are in their first year of competitive debate. The Wildcat division showcases students competing in their first two academic years of intercollegiate debate beyond the novice level.

In the open division, a team from Emory University, Daniel Gallagher and Ike Song, defeated a team from the University of Michigan, Eleanor Barrett and Jiyeon Park, in the final round to be crowned tournament champions.

Teams from Michigan State University and the University of Kansas finished the tournament as semifinalists. Northwestern University, the University of Kentucky, Georgetown University, and the University of Iowa were quarterfinalists.

Teams from California State University Long Beach, Emory University, the University of Kansas, Stanford University, the University of Michigan, Dartmouth College, the University of Kentucky, Baylor University, the University of Texas at Dallas, George Mason University, the University of Texas at Austin, Harvard University, New York University, Binghamton University, Michigan State University, and the University of California Berkeley also reached the tournament’s elimination debates.

In the novice division, teams from the University of Miami, the University of West Georgia, Wake Forest University, and Indiana University advanced over teams from West Georgia University, the University of Miami, and the US Naval Academy. In the semifinals, the University of Indiana defeated the University of Miami, and the University of West Georgia defeated Wake Forest University.

In the championship debate, Hannah Hansen and Edward Handley from West Georgia University bested Adam Foudali and Rowlin Garcia from Indiana University.

In the Wildcat division, teams from Southwestern University and Michigan State University advanced over a hybrid team from the University of Iowa and Liberty University and a team from the University of Michigan. Michigan State University, Southwestern University, Samford University, and Liberty University were eliminated in the quarterfinals. Teams from George Mason University and Emory University were eliminated in the semifinals.

The final debate between Liberty University, Elijah Tooley and Will Spencer, and the University of Texas Austin, Blaine Sutton and Parker Hamstra, had Liberty University come out on top to win the Wildcat division.

Debaters participating also receive speaker points for each of their preliminary debates. In the open division, Daniel Gallagher was named top speaker. Arushi Panchal was named top speaker in the novice division and Andre Esteves was named top speaker in the Wildcat division.

The J.W. Patterson Debates is the first ADA tournament of the new season. The next ADA tournament will be hosted by the University of Minnesota.

About the American Debate Association

The American Debate Association began in 1985 as an intercollegiate debate association. It uses the resolution selected by the Cross Examination Debate Association and the National Debate Tournament. Currently they have 44 member schools. The ADA's mission is increasing participation, maintaining a balance between education and competition, and ensuring an equitable and fair activity for all programs, regardless of their size or experience.

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