



PI KAPPA DELTA

The Art of Persuasion, Beautiful and Just

Pi Kappa Delta Finalizes International Service Project in India

Ripon, Wisconsin. Pi Kappa Delta has signed a memorandum of understanding with Visthar – an educational institution located in Bangalore, India – to create a three-year international service opportunity designed to support the creation of the Bangalore Speech and Debating Society, and to encourage Indian colleges and High Schools to add speech and debate instruction to their curricula. PKD students and instructors will conduct workshops, give lectures, demonstrate events, train judges and assist local hosts with tournament administration. Instruction will take place in English, but translations services will be available if necessary.

Phase one of the project is scheduled for August of 2012. PKD students, coaches and scholars will travel to Bangalore to provide advice and technical assistance on event design, tournament preparation, coaching techniques and instructional curriculum. Although the number of participants in the first phase of the project will be limited to ten (four faculty members and six students), years two and three promise broader opportunities for participation – particularly for undergraduate students.

Although annual debates are common in elite Indian high schools, year-round speech and debate competitions do not exist, and many impoverished schools lack access to speech and debate training. “We view this as fully consistent with our mission to expand access to speech and debate throughout the world and, in turn, to encourage civil discourse and community empowerment among participants,” notes Phillip Voight, who forged the agreement and traveled to India to present it on behalf of the National Council. The initial focus will be on five events: Basic Public Speaking, Persuasive Speaking, Debate (either public forum or Parliamentary), Dramatic Interpretation and Program Oral Interpretation. PKD formats will serve as the initial starting point, but organizers hope that the Bangalore Speech and Debate Society will develop its own rules, formats, and performative expectations. “We’re very mindful of the importance of providing training that is culturally appropriate,” said Voight. “We hope that the experiment will prove popular and spread throughout India, and we have no interest in mandating American event rules.” Ultimately, some Bangalore college students might even decide to become full-fledged Pi Kappa Delta members and participate in either the NCT or the National Tournament and Convention in an electronically-mediated event.

Visthar, for its part, was attracted by its desire to place important issues of social justice, resource distribution, and community empowerment before Indian high school and college students, and to help students develop life-long critical thinking, research, composition and presentation skills that are crucial to their future success. As Visthar’s Executive Director David Selveraj noted, “We strongly

believe that this program will help prepare students to lead just lives of leadership and service as members of a truly global community.”

Pi Kappa Delta students will be housed at Visthar, which has a campus located in suburban Bangalore that includes dormitory space, a library, classrooms, a dining commons and a number of other facilities including a community college. One of India’s premier non-profit educational training institutions, Visthar has conducted hundreds of social justice, community-organizing and capacity-building training sessions. With strong ties to the Indian NGO network, the Visthar partnership will also provide future internship opportunities for interested Pi Kappa Delta members – including the opportunity to serve a field organizer for the Bangalore Speech and Debate Society.

This service program is the first of several that Pi Kappa Delta is exploring. Other locations include Capetown, South Africa, and Zhuhai (near Hong Kong), China. An additional site in Phnom Penh, Cambodia is in the early planning stages.

Students and faculty will be responsible for securing airfare to India, but fundraising assistance will be available, and Pi Kappa Delta is actively seeking corporate sponsorship of the program. Details of the program and application forms will be posted on the website in October.

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