

News

StFX students make it an all-StFX final, claiming top honours at U4 Up for Debate weekend at Bishop's University

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Peter Blaikie presents the Jane Blaikie Cup to StFX student debate winners Alex Warshick and Ryley Erickson (Photo credit: Ryan Millar)

StFX students didn't leave much "Up for Debate." They delivered a one-two finish at a student debate tournament hosted by Bishop's University Jan. 31 and Feb. 1, 2014, a U4 League event that saw the team of Alex Warshick (**Political Science**) and Ryley Erickson claim the Jane Blaikie Cup in an all-StFX final.

Second place went to Hannah Stordy and Chris Duignan in the eight-team tournament that included representatives from Acadia, Bishop's, Mount Allison, and StFX, the U4 League schools. It was the second annual "Up for Debate" weekend hosted by Bishop's.

Peter Blaikie, a well-known Montreal lawyer, served as judge.



The StFX student debaters at Bishop's University (Photo credit: Ryan Millar)

Along with the student debate tournament, weekend events also included a Donald lecture and a TEDx-inspired series of talks titled “The U4 Symposium.”

Both StFX debate teams went 3-0 in the preliminary round.

The final debate was a direct passage from the Quebec Charter of Values about the wearing of religious attire and symbols in the public body and in positions employed by the government. The government side of Mr. Warshick and Mr. Erickson had to support the passage from the Charter that would ban all such symbols and attire. Ms. Stordy and Mr. Duignan represented the opposition.

“We had the unenviable task of supporting the controversial Quebec Charter of Values, so we figured the deck was stacked against us. Everyone from the tournament as well as other organizers, professors, and students were in attendance for the final, all of which added to the daunting task we had,” says Mr. Warshick, a fourth year honours political science student and graduate of Prince Andrew High School from Dartmouth, NS.

“It was great though to see both StFX teams in the final; so we knew one of us would win the trophy. Both sides put up strong arguments, but in the end the judge agreed that we had won. I had a fun time throughout the tournament as I got to put a lot of my political philosophy and political science studies to their full use.”

Mr. Warshick says as was the case with the U4 Leadership Summit at StFX the week before, the event was a great opportunity to meet new people and engage with them.

“Probably the highlight of the weekend was the social interactions with the other students. I got to know a number of the Bishop's students who hosted us quite well and we all got to get a taste of Bishop's campus and community life. I think the atmosphere was very positive and there was a lot of enthusiasm about the future that U4 collaboration will bring about. It was also remarkable how similar the students and staff of these four schools were.”

Chris Duignan agrees it was an amazing opportunity to connect with student leaders from other universities, to debate and discuss important ideas that are relevant to the undergraduate educational experience.

“It was a privilege to speak and dine with many highly qualified academics and discuss these issues from the perspective of a university student. It was a weekend of learning, development and fun,” says the second year business student from Auckland, New Zealand.

Mr. Duignan says he has debated since high school, and joined X debate his first year at StFX.

“I like it because it is both challenging and fun, and a great way to engage in controversial issues facing the world today. It has also vastly improved my ability to think and analyze information critically and upped my confidence levels and public speaking skills. It’s one of the most enjoyable societies I belong to, filled with a great group of people.”



StFX philosophy professor Dr. Louis Groarke

At the event, StFX philosophy professor Dr. Louis Groarke presented a U4 Symposium talk on "*The Ancient Greek Art of Minding Your Own Business.*"

The theme of the weekend was mindfulness in undergraduate education and exploring the complex issues around mental health. Dr. Groarke’s talk was on the Ancient Stoics and how their “tough love” strategy actually makes it easier to deal with the adversity, the hardships, the stress, in any ordinary human life. “So a peek at a liberal arts education and showing how studying the agents is relevant today,” he says.

Dr. Groarke says Bishop’s was very hospitable and it was good to mix with interdisciplinary colleagues from all the institutions.