



Photo by Jean Dixon

## Nationally ranked debate team has high expectations

After finishing 14th in the nation last year, the University's debate team returned last semester with even higher rankings and confidence to win nationals in the spring semester.

"Our performance this semester was an indication of our continual improvement," said Philip Sharp, director of forensics and debate team coach.

The team finished the semester strong at the University of Pacific on Nov. 7-9, winning the round robin competition and finishing third place overall in the small school division.

"The win is indicative of our strong chances of finishing well at nationals," Sharp said.

The team took home trophies at all four competitions. On Oct. 23-26, the team clinched second place overall in one of the most competitive competitions of the year at a competition held at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Wash. On Nov. 1-2, the team got third place overall at a tournament

at the University of California, Berkeley. David Pena and Max Alderman were awarded individual tournament champions at three of the competitions this semester. Pena won the award at the UC-Berkeley tournament out of 100 individuals. Alderman won the award at the University of Puget Sound and again at the University of Pacific. On Dec. 6-7, Elia Pirtle and Travis Salley took gold in the junior division, Jack Cholin and Matthew Hogan were semi-finalists in the open competition and the team took third place for the small entry division at Cal State, Long Beach.

"I know that the intelligence and ability of all of our debaters gives us a real shot at winning every event we attend," Sharp said.

The University's debate team consists of 12 students, eight of whom travel. Their practice runs four days a week, four hours each day. Not every student attends all the practices, but the average student practices eight hours a week. According to Sharp, many benefits can

*The Debate Team gathers for a photo on the steps of the Knowledge Center, where they practice. Left side (from front to back): Irin Mannan, Travis Salley, Assistant Coach Keith Osborne, David Pena, Matthew Long. Right side: Elia Pirtle, Matthew Hogan, Jack Cholin, Max Alderman, Director/Head Coach Philip Sharp. Not Pictured: Mark Mendoza and Adam Fluke.*

come with participating in the debate team.

"It definitely looks good on a resume," Sharp said. "It will help you get into law school and grad school and will improve your skills of public speaking and critical thinking."

With no more competitions until January, the team plans to study, research and practice as they prepare for next semester's competitions and nationals.

"We hope to make a serious run at either of the two national titles while creating a solid squad," Sharp said. The team debates under two organizations, the National Parliamentary Debate Association and the National Parliamentary Tournament of Excellence. The Nationals are held at UC Berkeley and Pacific University in late March.