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Debate team ends season with multiple accolades

Fresno State's debate team ended a winning season with many individual student awards.

At the CEDA National Tournament at Idaho State in late March, Pritpal Randhawa, Sierra Holley, Jamila Ahmed and Emma Wheeler earned awards as National Debate Scholars. Ariana Willingham and Candis Tate earned awards as National Debate Scholars at the “cum laude” level. Tate was also selected for the “All-American Debate Team,” which features thirty prominent debaters from across the country.

Last week, at the CEDA National Tournament, Emma Wheeler was selected as “Novice of the Year” among all the first-year debaters in the country.

Wheeler and Willingham won two debates on the varsity level during the Idaho event. Both intend to return to the debate team at Fresno State next year.

Randhawa, Mitchell, Ahmed and Christian Ybarra won three rounds at the varsity level of the CEDA National Tournament. Ahmed and Ybarra’s performance qualified them for the elimination rounds in novice. They beat Johnson County, KS in the quarterfinals before losing to Rochester, NY in the semifinals. The pair ended the competition by tying for third place in the country on the novice level.

“The entire team achieved outstanding accomplishments this season, but last weekend the most impressive performance belonged to Candis Tate and Sierra Holley,” said Dr. Kevin Kuswa, debate team director. Tate and Holley beat teams from the US Military Academy, the University of Puget Sound, Rochester, and others, fighting their way to a 5-3 record and becoming the first team from Fresno State in several years to clear at a varsity tournament.

“Candis and Sierra had an inspirational debate against a strong team from Louisville in the elimination rounds and ended the tournament ranked in the top 40 teams in the country. Quite a feat for any team, let alone a pair that has only been debating for two years.” said Kuwasa.

The team as a whole won second place in the nation for Public Debate Advocacy for the public forum debates at Reedley College, and earned an undergraduate travel grant for the Madison Cup being held at James Madison University in April. Randhawa and Tom Boroujeni will be representing the team.

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For more information, contact Dr. Kevin Kuswa at 559.278.2565 or kkuswa@csufresno.edu.

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