



THE  
NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION  
FOR URBAN  
DEBATE  
LEAGUES

## FY 2012 - FY 2016 STRATEGIC PLAN

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Approved by the NAUDL Governing Board: October 2011

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# I. Strategic Planning Background

## A. Organizational Background

The National Association for Urban Debate Leagues (NAUDL) is a nonprofit organization headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. Since 2002 it has served as the national leadership organization for urban debate. In the last four years the NAUDL has built or re-organized twelve urban debate leagues. Today, nineteen urban debate leagues around the country are members of the NAUDL's informal network of leagues:



The NAUDL has a twenty-member Governing Board of Directors and an eleven-member Honorary Board. The organization has five full-time and two part-time staff members.

## B. Strategic Planning Process

### 1. Strategic Planning Goals

The NAUDL's sought in this process to:

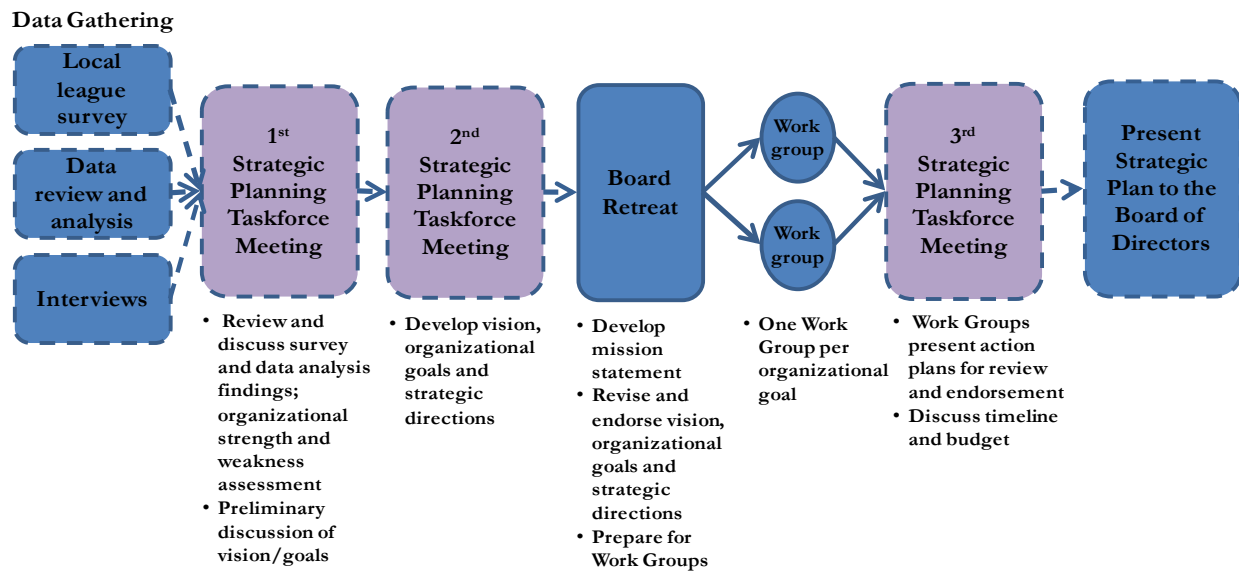
- Affirm or refine the NAUDL's mission and vision.
- Build board consensus around the strategic direction and organizational goals of the NAUDL.
- Engage board, staff, donors, volunteers and others in the strategic planning process.
- Develop and document a strategic plan with overarching goals, strategic directions, and action plans for the next five years.

### 2. Process Activities

The strategic planning process included key elements in many areas and from several sources, including:

- *Data Gathering and Preparation.* Before the task force, staff and board work began in earnest, the Alford Group conducted a survey of the board chairs and staff of the local leagues to secure feedback on programming and their relationship with NAUDL. The Alford Group also conducted interviews with selected funders and donors to get their views as to actual and potential revenue sources. The firm also reviewed previously completed NAUDL work product, including surveys and other institutional data.
- *Strategic Planning Task Force.* An eleven-member strategic planning task force oversaw the planning process and provided critical input. The task force included board members, staff, and key stakeholders including funders, and partners at two of the nation's premier business consulting firms. The group met three times to develop goals and strategies, and to finalize a draft strategic plan for presentation to the NAUDL Governing Board.
- *Board Input.* The NAUDL's Governing Board participated in a half-day retreat after the second task force meeting to review and provide feedback on the work completed to date. Board members endorsed some goals and strategies and suggested modifications to others.
- *Work Groups.* Following the board retreat, the NAUDL formed small working groups to develop more detailed action plans for Supporting Goals 1 and 4.
- *Board Approval:* A draft plan was presented to the NAUDL Governing Board for discussion in July 2011. While there was consensus in favor of the plan, the board asked the executive director to solicit additional feedback from the leagues. She sent the draft plan to the board chair and executive director for each league and invited them to participate in conference calls. Following conference calls with twelve leagues, she revised the strategic plan to incorporate their comments and suggestions. The NAUDL Governing Board approved the plan on October 26, 2011.

The following graphic shows the flow and sequence of these key activities:



### 3. Process Participants

*Strategic Planning Task Force:* Barbara Carney (Director of Development, NAUDL), Darin Snyder (Board Chair, Bay Area Urban Debate League); Diana Dunker (Chief Programming Officer, NAUDL); Wayne Firestone (Member, NAUDL Governing Board); Leonard Gail (Board Chair, NAUDL Governing Board and Board Member, Chicago Debate Commission); Mark Koulogeorge (Member, NAUDL Governing Board); Linda Listrom (Executive Director, NAUDL); Michael Mankins (Partner, Bain & Co.); Paul Mang (Partner, McKinsey & Co.); Richard Sullivan (Vice Chair, NAUDL Governing Board and Chair, Chicago Debate Commission); Steve Stein (Executive Director, Boston Debate League); and Stuart Singer (Member, NAUDL Governing Board).

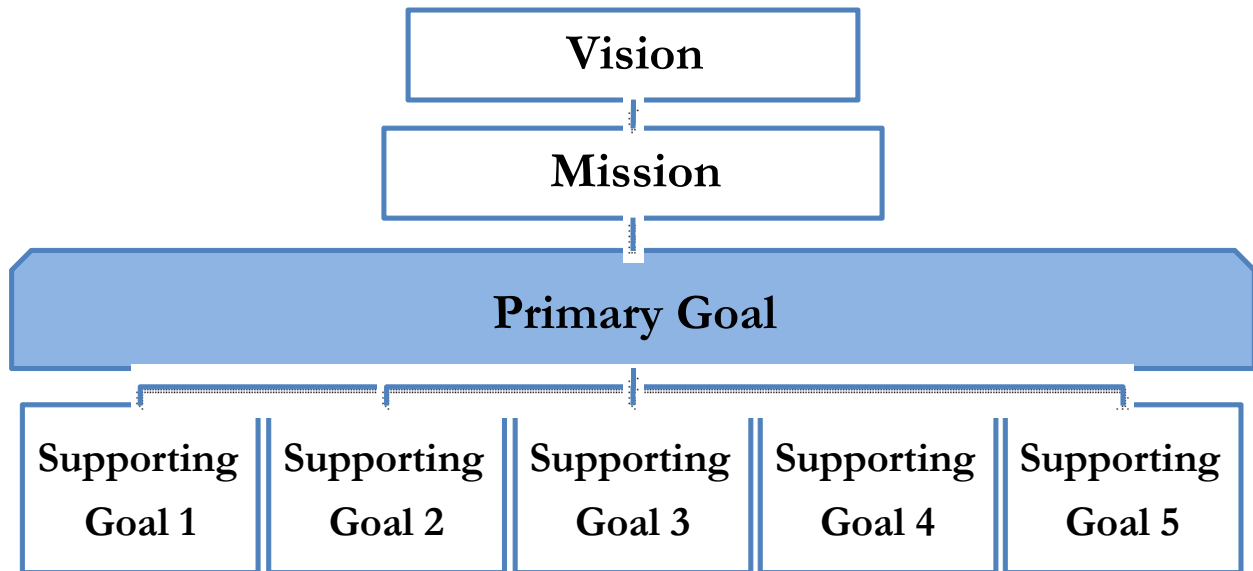
*Goal 1 Working Group:* Craig Budner (Board Chair, Dallas Urban Debate League); Elizabeth Campbell (Board Chair, Houston Urban Debate League); David Harris (Board Chair, St. Louis Urban Debate League); Dan Plants (Board Vice Chair, Bay Area Urban Debate League); and Henry Weissmann (Board Co-chair, Los Angeles Metro Urban Debate League).

*Goal 4 Working Group:* Leonard Gail, Linda Listrom, and Gretchen Crosby Sims (Member, NAUDL Governing Board).

### C. Plan Framework

The plan outlined on the following pages refines the vision and the mission of the NAUDL and explains the goals the organization will pursue over the next five years. Through these goals, NAUDL leadership will focus its work on those issues where its expertise and other resources can make a significant difference in increasing the number of students who participate in urban debate.

## D. Strategic Plan Overview



The NAUDL has developed strategic directions and action steps to accomplish these goals. These strategic directions and action steps vary in their level of specificity; the plan is more specific where there is a greater level of consensus on the goal at issue and less specific where the goal is more short term, and/or where it is less affected by the operational environment.

Furthermore, the NAUDL will frequently assess the human resources, financial resources, and organizational infrastructure changes required to implement the programs outlined in this plan. On an annual basis, NAUDL staff and appropriate board committees will create working documents that will define the operational approach to achieving the organization's strategic goals.

## II. Strategic Plan

### D. Vision and Mission

#### **NAUDL's Vision:**

All urban youth graduate from high school prepared to succeed in college and their careers, and to contribute to their communities.

#### **NAUDL's Mission:**

As the national leader of the urban debate movement, the NAUDL works with its partner leagues to provide debate programming to urban middle and high school students.

The NAUDL is committed to urban debate, because it works. It works where other solutions have failed -- in schools plagued with poor test scores and high dropout rates. By giving minority students from low-income families the tools they need to succeed, urban debate literally changes lives.

*Urban Debate Improves Secondary Literacy.* In high school students must learn to read critically.<sup>1</sup> Urban debate teaches these secondary literacy skills. Debaters prepare to compete by reading and analyzing complex nonfiction texts, such as academic journals and policy briefs. They learn how to read for important details, identify causal and comparative relationships, draw conclusions from evidence and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of an author's argument. As a result, urban debaters score higher than their non-debating peers on standardized tests designed to measure secondary literacy. In a ten-year study of the Chicago Urban Debate League, Dr. Briana Mezuk found that African American males who debated were twice as likely as their non-debating peers to score at or above the ACT's college readiness benchmark in English and seventy percent more likely to score at or above the college readiness benchmark in Reading.<sup>2</sup> These results are remarkable, particularly in comparison to national trends. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, from 1992 to 2005 reading scores for African American students declined sharply and these scores remained flat from 2005 to 2009.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Reading Between the Lines* (ACT 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Briana Mezuk, "Urban Debate and High School Educational Outcomes for African American Males: The Case of the Chicago Debate League," *Journal of Negro Education* 78(3) (2009), pp. 298-9. See Briana Mezuk, Irina Bondarenko, Suzanne Smith, and Eric Tucker, "Impact of participating in a policy debate program on academic achievement: Evidence from the Chicago Urban Debate League," *Educational Research and Reviews* 6(9) (5 September 2011), pp. 629-30, available online at <http://www.academicjournals.org/err/PDF/Pdf%202011/5Sep/Mezuk%20et%20al.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Wendy Grigg, Patricia Donahue, and Gloria Dion, "The Nation's Report Card: 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading and Math 2005" (National Center for Education Statistics, February 2007), available online at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/main2005/2007468.asp>; "The Nation's Report Card: Grade 12 Reading

***Urban Debate Improves Academic Performance.*** The thrill of competition ignites a fire in students, inspiring them to spend their afternoons, evenings and weekends conducting research, practicing their arguments and competing in tournaments. Not surprisingly, by spending so much out-of-school time doing school-related work, debaters improve their classroom performance. Dr. Mezuk found that by participating in debate African American twelfth-graders raised their grade point averages.<sup>4</sup> The Houston Independent School District recently reached the same conclusion, finding that debaters in the Houston Urban Debate League earned higher grades in core courses than non-debaters and had better attendance rates and fewer disciplinary incidents.<sup>5</sup>

***Urban Debate Improves High School Graduation Rates.*** African American and Hispanic students in urban schools have little more than a fifty percent chance of graduating with a high school diploma.<sup>6</sup> Urban debate keeps these students in school. Debate is an academic sport and, like most sports, it is exciting. Debate engages students, even those who previously had no interest in learning. It encourages them to set ambitious goals for the future. By competing and winning, urban debaters learn that high school graduation, and even college, is within their grasp. The results are dramatic. Dr. Mezuk found that African American male students who debate are seventy percent more likely than their non-debating peers to graduate and three times less likely to drop out.<sup>7</sup>

***Debate Prepares Students for College.*** More than seventy-five percent of urban debaters attend four-year colleges. Most are the first in their families to do so. Moreover, they enter college prepared to succeed. They are more likely to test as college-ready on the ACT's English and Reading subject matter tests.<sup>8</sup> The Common Core State Standards, developed to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare children for college and the workforce, emphasize the importance of teaching students to develop logical arguments supported by evidence.<sup>9</sup> This skill lies at the core of policy debate.

***Debate Prepares Students for Twenty-first Century Careers.*** To compete effectively in the global economy, twenty-first century workers will need to master four important skills, sometimes called the "4 C's": (1) critical thinking and problem solving; (2) communication; (3) collaboration; and (4) creativity and innovation.<sup>10</sup> Urban debate teaches all of these skills. **Debaters learn to think critically.** They learn how to analyze arguments, finding strengths and weaknesses, and how to construct their own arguments, supported with evidence. **Debaters learn to communicate**

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and Mathematics 2009 National and Pilot State Results" (National Center for Education Statistics, November 2010), available online at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/main2009/2011455.asp>.

<sup>4</sup> Mezuk at p. 297; Mezuk, Bondarenko, Smith and Tucker at p. 630.

<sup>5</sup> Terry B. Grier, "The Houston Urban Debate League, 2009-2010 (Houston Independent School District, May 11, 2011), available online at

[http://www.hisd.org/ResearchAccountability/Home/PE\\_FedTitlePrgrms/HUDI.%20Report%20050911.pdf](http://www.hisd.org/ResearchAccountability/Home/PE_FedTitlePrgrms/HUDI.%20Report%20050911.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Swanson, C., *Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation, Class of 2001* (The Urban Institute Education Policy Center, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Mezuk at pp. 297-8. See Mezuk, Bondarenko, Smith and Tucker at pp. 628-9.

<sup>8</sup> Mezuk at pp. 298-9. See Mezuk, Bondarenko, Smith, and Tucker at pp. 629-30.

<sup>9</sup> "Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts," (Common Core State Standards Initiative, June 2, 2010), available online at

[http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI\\_ELA%20Standards.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> "Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning" (Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills), available online at <http://www.p21.org/index.ph>.

**effectively.** To win, debaters must be able to communicate their arguments clearly and persuasively to judges with differing backgrounds and perspectives – teachers, parents, college students and community leaders. **Debaters learn to be creative.** They quickly discover that they cannot win debates by borrowing arguments from newspapers and magazines. Instead, they must be creative and develop their own unique arguments. **Debaters learn to collaborate.** They work in teams, under the guidance of a teacher-coach, sharing ideas, arguments and evidence with their teammates. Urban debate prepares students for twenty-first century careers. Urban debate alums have established successful careers in many fields, including: medicine, education, government, law, and business.

*Debate Prepares Students for Community Engagement.* Debate gives urban students a voice. Urban debaters learn that their ideas and opinions matter. By reading, thinking and arguing about public policy issues they acquire a life-long interest in the issues affecting their communities. By learning to think critically and to communicate effectively, urban debaters develop the capacity for leadership. As researchers at Georgetown University found, the skills learned in debate are important to successful leadership in virtually every field imaginable. Debaters are disproportionately represented in leadership ranks in the law, business, and academia. A survey by the National Forensic League shows that sixty-four percent of the Members of the United States Congress competed in debate or speech in high school.

## E. Primary Goal

Within the next five years, triple the number of students who participate in competitive policy debate through NAUDL-affiliated urban debate leagues.

### 1. Rationale

Last year about 5,000 students participated in urban debate. There are thousands more who did not have the opportunity to debate, either because their school did not have a debate team, or because the team did not recruit students effectively. Because urban debate can change the life trajectory of urban youth, the NAUDL and its affiliated leagues can – and must – reach more students.

Over the next five years, the NAUDL’s primary goal will be to triple the number of students who are competing in competitive policy debate through its affiliated leagues. The NAUDL has chosen to focus its efforts on policy debate, because research shows that this form of debate dramatically changes educational outcomes for urban students.<sup>11</sup> By committing to triple the number of students, the NAUDL has challenged its board and staff with an ambitious goal. To meet this goal, it will work closely with the leagues directly responsible for recruiting students and coaches and providing debate programming. Specifically, the NAUDL will take the following steps:

*League Goals for Growth.* The NAUDL will encourage each affiliated league to adopt its own quantifiable goal for growth in student participation over the next five years. The NAUDL

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<sup>11</sup> Mezuk, B., et. al., supra.

recognizes that each league is different and not every league will be able to triple its number of students in five years. Some may grow more, while others may grow less. But, each league should plan to significantly increase its rate of growth by establishing a challenging but achievable goal for student participation. The NAUDL also recognizes that it is not enough for leagues simply to grow. As they grow, they must also maintain and, with the help of the NAUDL, improve the quality of their debate programming.

*Performance Measurement System.* The NAUDL will measure its progress and the progress of the leagues by implementing a new performance measurement system. This kind of system is desirable for a variety of reasons, including that the NAUDL and the leagues are more likely to meet their goals if they regularly measure their progress. For the next year, the NAUDL will continue to measure growth in student participation manually, using the Reporting Notebook. At the same time, it will develop a new automated performance measurement system that will enable the NAUDL and its leagues to measure growth in the number of urban debaters in real time.

*Support for the Leagues.* In the past, the NAUDL has secured student participation growth by building new leagues, increasing the number of leagues from eight to nineteen in just three years. Going forward, the NAUDL is more likely to achieve growth by strengthening existing leagues, rather than building new ones. While the NAUDL will continue to build new leagues at a more moderate pace, it will devote more of its resources to helping existing leagues grow. The NAUDL will work with the leagues to: (1) build capacity, particularly in the area of fundraising; (2) explore new areas of programming that have the potential to reach more students; and (3) become a more effective advocate for urban debate with students, teachers, schools, and school districts. These supporting goals are discussed in greater detail in pages 9-18 below.

*Affiliation Agreement.* The NAUDL will ask each urban debate league to sign a formal affiliation agreement. Currently, the NAUDL considers the nineteen leagues sending teams to the Urban Debate National Championship Tournament to be part of its informal network. The NAUDL intends to significantly expand the services it provides to these leagues. Through an affiliation agreement, the NAUDL will promise to provide expanded services to a league in exchange for the league's promise to regularly provide data. A league that receives services from the NAUDL should be willing to share data that shows whether those services are effective. This will not be a radical change. Most leagues already provide student participation data through the Reporting Notebook.

## **2. Strategic Directions and Action Steps**

Strategic Direction A: Encourage each urban debate league to adopt a quantifiable goal for growth in the number of urban debaters over the next five years.

Strategic Direction B: Develop a program performance measurement system.

- Working with the leagues, develop revised program performance metrics based on the Reporting Notebook. These metrics will: (1) focus on the NAUDL's primary goal of tripling the number of students; (2) incorporate the programming goals established by each local league; and (3) adequately account for the number of students and others reached by all forms of league programming, including tournament debates, classroom debates, and public debates.
- Working with a third party vendor, develop and implement a computer-based system that can be used to: (1) register students for tournaments; (2) tabulate tournaments; and (3) report student

participation data to the NAUDL and the affiliated leagues. Test the software, and then make it available to all leagues, with training and support for coaches and league directors.

Strategic Direction C: Ask leagues to formally affiliate with the NAUDL through an affiliation agreement.

- Ask all leagues that attended the 2011 Urban Debate National Championship and all leagues that wish to attend future Championships to sign an affiliation agreement.
- Under this agreement, a league will agree to provide student participation data to the NAUDL for its performance measurement system on a regular basis. In exchange, the NAUDL will agree to provide the services described in this strategic plan.

### 3. Metrics

- By the end of FY 2012, 85 percent of the leagues represented at the 2012 Urban Debate National Championship have signed an affiliation agreement with the NAUDL, adopted five-year growth goals, and regularly collect and transmit student participation data to the NAUDL.
- By 2014, all urban debate leagues represented at the Urban Debate National Championship have signed an affiliation agreement with the NAUDL, adopted five-year growth goals, and regularly collect and transmit student participation data to the NAUDL.

## F. Supporting Goal No. 1

Strengthen and support affiliated leagues, helping them to build capacity, achieve sustainable growth, and adopt best practices.

### 1. Rationale

From 2007 through 2010, the NAUDL expanded the urban debate network by building new leagues. Going forward, the NAUDL has concluded that the most effective way to achieve growth is not by building new leagues but by strengthening existing ones. During the strategic planning process the NAUDL heard many different ideas for how best to strengthen the leagues, such as: running league back office operations; training league directors in nonprofit management; and providing more fundraising support. The NAUDL does not have the resources to implement all these suggestions simultaneously. Instead, it has chosen to focus on a few strategies that are most likely to lead to an increase in the number of urban debaters.

*Training and Support on Fundraising.* Respondents to the league survey agreed that they need more help with fundraising. The NAUDL has concluded that better fundraising will produce better programming in the leagues, and, in particular, more urban debaters. It is no coincidence that leagues that raise the most money also have the most debaters. More funds enable a league to hire more staff and with more staff a league can grow by, for example, providing better training for

coaches, adding middle school debate, or adding more schools to the league. If the leagues are expected to grow, better fundraising is essential.

*Additional Training for League Boards.* Several league board chairs have told us candidly that they need help with more than fundraising and they have asked for training on board building, governance and leadership. Every league needs an effective board. An effective board can drive growth by, among other things, reaching a consensus on a goal for growth and managing the staff toward that goal. Conversely, a weak board may not be able to achieve consensus on any goals and may not even recognize that goals are important. Even more, a weak board cannot raise enough money, no matter how much fundraising training it receives. Thus, the NAUDL should provide every league board with the training and support it needs to function effectively.

*Leveraging the Network.* As a member of a national network, each league should be able to leverage off of the outstanding work that has already been done by others, including the NAUDL and other leagues. As the hub of the urban debate network, it is the NAUDL's responsibility to facilitate the sharing of this information. Some of the action steps discussed below, such as sharing best practices on student recruitment and retention, will contribute directly to increasing the number of debaters. Others will do so indirectly. For example, by developing a state-of-the-art coach training program, the NAUDL will help the leagues improve the quality of coaches. Good coaches are better able to recruit and retain students. In addition, by developing a coaching program that all leagues can use, the NAUDL will give the league staff more time to recruit students.

## **2. Strategic Directions and Action Steps**

Strategic Direction A: Develop and implement a program for training and supporting the boards of the affiliated leagues.

- Ask the board of directors of each affiliated league to complete a board self-assessment and evaluate the results.
- Develop and implement a program for training all affiliated league boards in fundraising.
- Develop and implement, as needed, a program for training affiliated league boards in best practices for nonprofit board leadership and governance.
- Develop a program of follow-up support for the league boards in fundraising and board best practices.
- Working with the leagues, develop operational metrics to be used to determine the extent to which the boards have successfully implemented best practices.
- Evaluate the success of the training program and make changes as needed.

Strategic Direction B: Develop and implement a program to provide fundraising training and technical assistance to the staff of the affiliated leagues.

- Develop a program for training the staff of the affiliated leagues in fundraising.

- Develop a plan for providing ongoing technical assistance in fundraising to the staff of the affiliated leagues, taking into consideration the needs of the leagues, the resource limitations of the NAUDL, and the best practices of other national nonprofit organizations.
- Evaluate the training and technical assistance program and make changes as needed.

Strategic Direction C: Help the affiliated leagues build and maintain strong relationships within their schools.

- Develop and implement a training and technical assistance program for the staff of the affiliated leagues on how to advocate effectively for urban debate with school principals in their leagues.
- Develop and implement a training and technical assistance program for the staff of the affiliated leagues on how to recruit and retain coaches and students most effectively.
- Evaluate the training and technical assistance program and make changes as needed.

Strategic Direction D: Facilitate the sharing of best practices throughout the NAUDL network.

- Working with the affiliated leagues, develop and implement an online toolkit for league staff, with easy-to-use reference materials, e.g., forms, templates, and checklists tailored to the needs of urban debate leagues. These reference materials would provide useful information on topics such as finance, league operations, fundraising, and student and coach recruitment and retention. Evaluate these materials and update them on a regular basis.
- Working with the affiliated leagues that already excel in coach training, develop a state-of-the-art coach training program, including written lesson plans, which can be used by all leagues to train debate coaches. Evaluate the training program and make changes as needed.
- Working with the affiliated leagues, re-establish the monthly league directors' conference calls and use them as a forum for the leagues to share information on best practices, particularly on important programming issues such as student recruitment and retention.
- Further develop opportunities for the league boards to exchange ideas and discuss issues of mutual concern.

### 3. Metrics

- The leagues receiving training and technical assistance in fundraising increase their fundraising revenues at least ten percent per year.
- The leagues receiving training and technical assistance on building relationships within their schools retain 50 percent of their coaches in FY 2013; 60 percent of their coaches in FY 2014; and 70 percent of their coaches in FY 2015 and FY 2016.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> This metric measures the retention of teacher-coaches. A teacher-coach is a full-time classroom teacher who receives a stipend to coach a debate team. The teacher-coach is the head coach for the team, responsible for training and supervising student-debaters. This metric does not include teacher-coaches who resign as a result of systemic personnel changes caused by budget constraints, changes in administration, and changes in district-wide policies or priorities.

- In the leagues receiving training and technical assistance on building relationships within their schools the following percentage of league debaters compete in a least fifteen tournament rounds during a single school year:
  - FY 2013: 33 percent;
  - FY 2014: 45 percent; and
  - FY 2015 and FY 2016: 60 percent.
- In leagues where league directors and coaches receive training and technical assistance on student recruitment and retention, the average number of students per team grows by at least 15 percent per year each year that the training and technical assistance is provided.
- In future annual surveys, at least 40 percent of the league staff members responding to the survey rate the toolkit as “useful” and at least 40 percent rate it as “very useful.”
- Seventy-five percent of the affiliated leagues use at least some of the coach training materials on a regular basis.
- In future quarterly surveys, at least 40 percent of the responding league staff members rate the monthly league director conference calls as “useful” and at least 40 percent rate them as “very useful.”

## **G. Supporting Goal No. 2**

Build new leagues at a moderate pace, focusing efforts on large school districts and cities with strategic value.

### **1. Rationale**

One way to increase the number of urban debaters is to build more leagues. However, the NAUDL recognizes that for the next three years strengthening existing leagues must be a higher priority than building new leagues. While the NAUDL should continue to build new urban debate leagues, it should do so at a more moderate pace. It should focus on school districts with large student populations, where it is more likely to be able to build a large league. It should also target cities that have strategic value, such as increased visibility or funding.

The NAUDL should also take steps to make it easier to replicate its past success. While the NAUDL has developed a proven model for building new leagues, it should strengthen this model by incorporating into it the lessons learned from its initial phase of league building. To make the start-up phase easier and more efficient, the NAUDL also should develop an orientation program for new league board chairs and staff.

## 2. Strategic Directions and Action Steps

Strategic Direction A: Study lessons learned from the initial phase of expansion.

- Form a working group of NAUDL staff and board members and local league staff and board members to study the lessons learned during expansion and make recommendations for changes.
- After recommendations have been formulated, consider additional metrics designed to measure the success of new leagues.

Strategic Direction B: Develop an orientation program for new leagues.

- Develop an orientation program for board chairs and staff of new leagues. Evaluate the orientation program and make changes as needed.

Strategic Direction C: Opportunistically launch one or two leagues each year.

- Establish criteria for evaluating potential leagues.
- Using these criteria, launch at least one, but no more than two, new leagues per year for the next five years.

## 3. Metrics

- In its first year after launch, each school in the new league has at least six debaters (three teams) participating in practices and at least four debaters (two teams) participating in tournaments.
- In the second and third year, each school has at least ten debaters (five teams) participating in practices and at least eight debaters (four teams) participating in tournaments.
- In the fourth year, each school has at least sixteen debaters (eight teams) participating in practices and at least ten debaters (five teams) participating in tournaments.
- In future surveys, at least 40 percent of the responding board chairs and league directors rate the orientation program for new leagues as “useful” and 40 percent rate it as “very useful.”

### H. Supporting Goal No. 3

Expand middle school policy debate and explore Debate Across the Curriculum as an innovative way to expand the number of students participating in rigorous, evidence-based argument.

#### 1. Rationale

The NAUDL can significantly increase the number of urban debaters by helping the affiliated leagues expand into middle school policy debate. Currently, five leagues (Atlanta, Baltimore,

Chicago, Minnesota and New Jersey) offer middle school policy debate. Eleven respondents to the league survey are “very interested” in expanding into middle school debate, and four others are “interested.” Because middle school debate uses the same format (although somewhat simplified) as high school debate, it has the potential to deliver the same educational benefits. In addition, these programs will help high schools to build bigger debate teams. Leagues with middle school programs report that once a student is exposed to debate in middle school, he or she is more likely to join the high school team.

The NAUDL will also explore Debate Across the Curriculum. The Boston Debate League has pioneered a project to teach debate techniques to not only the debate coach but to all teachers in a school. The league does not develop curriculum; instead, it teaches teachers how to incorporate classroom debates into the curriculum they are already using. Eleven survey respondents are “very interested” in expanding into Debate Across the Curriculum and six are “interested.”

This program has the potential to deliver a number of benefits. *First*, it may improve grades and test scores, not just for students on the debate team, but for all students. While more research is needed, teachers participating in the Boston program report that

classroom debates have helped students to earn better grades. *Second*, because Debate Across the Curriculum reaches more students, it may help a league strengthen its relationship with the school district. The Boston Debate League reports that its program has had this effect, and school districts have asked at least two other leagues to develop a Debate Across the Curriculum program. *Third*, it may enable leagues to recruit more students for the debate team. Classroom debates can spark a student’s interest in joining the team and give teachers an opportunity to identify and recruit potential debaters.

## **2. Strategic Directions and Action Steps**

Strategic Direction A: Expand middle school debate.

- Work with the affiliated leagues to launch new middle school debate programs.

Strategic Direction B: Explore NAUDL-supported expansion of the Debate Across the Curriculum program.

- Work with the Boston Debate League to obtain funding for an evaluation of Debate Across the Curriculum.
- As funding becomes available, explore opportunities to develop Debate Across the Curriculum programs in other interested leagues.

## **3. Metrics**

- Within five years, at least fifteen affiliated leagues operate middle school debate programs.
- Within five years, at least 3,000 middle school students participate in middle school debate programs operated by the affiliated leagues.

- Thirty percent of graduating middle-schoolers who participated in a middle school debate program for at least one year go on to join their high school debate team.
- Within five years, at least three leagues operate successful Debate Across the Curriculum programs.

## I. Supporting Goal No. 4

Empower the NAUDL and its affiliated leagues to be more effective advocates for urban debate.

### 1. Rationale

While Dr. Briana Mezuk’s study of the Chicago Debate League has been very valuable, the NAUDL should facilitate more research on the impact of urban debate. When asked to rank “potential visibility and advocacy activities for the NAUDL,” half of the survey respondents ranked “more academic research on the impact of urban debate” as the first priority; all but a few ranked this among the top three priorities. The leagues report they need studies that replicate Dr. Mezuk’s results in their own school districts. In addition, both the NAUDL and the leagues need experimental design-type studies, required by many funders of education and after-school programs. Unfortunately, it will take years to complete these studies. In the meantime, the NAUDL should help the leagues make the case for urban debate, using other kinds of student achievement data.

The NAUDL should also help the affiliated leagues build stronger relationships with their local school districts. Two-thirds of the survey respondents reported that the school district was their first or second largest source of funding. It is therefore not surprising that among potential “visibility and advocacy activities” for the NAUDL, the leagues ranked “assistance lobbying your local school district for support” as second in importance, behind “more academic research on the impact of debate.” When asked to list “the three most important things that the NAUDL could do that would be most helpful for your league,” several respondents reported that they need help building relationships with their school districts. Without strong relationships, there is a risk that some leagues could lose their school district funding. Many school districts, short on funds, are cutting programs from their budgets. For an urban debate league, less school district money means fewer schools in the league and fewer debaters. Conversely, if a league hopes to grow, one of the easiest ways for it to do so is by adding schools to the league, something that is impossible without school district support.

### 2. Strategic Directions and Action Steps

Strategic Direction A: Assist the affiliated leagues in obtaining student achievement data for their middle school and high school urban debaters.

- Working with the leagues, develop a system for tracking each urban debater after high school, using self-reported or league-reported data, e.g., did the debater enroll in college? If so, where? Did he or she graduate from college? Attend professional school?
- Assist leagues in obtaining aggregate student achievement data from their school districts, especially data that can be used to demonstrate program effectiveness, i.e., high school graduation, college readiness (standardized test scores and grades), school attendance and disciplinary action.
- Assist leagues in negotiating agreements with local school districts to obtain student achievement data needed for research studies, i.e., high school graduation, grades, test scores, attendance records, disciplinary actions for each individual debater.

Strategic Direction B: Develop and implement a long-term plan for research on the impact of urban debate.

- Select three affiliated leagues to participate in a long term experimental design-type study of the impact of high school urban debate on student achievement.
- Select third party researchers to conduct these studies.
- Jointly with the three leagues, apply for and obtain a multi-year foundation grant to fund this research.
- Develop a plan for studying the impact of middle school debate on middle school and high school academic achievement.
- Explore and support other types of research studies that may be useful to the NAUDL and its leagues.

Strategic Direction C: Help the affiliated leagues build and maintain strong relationships with their school districts.

- Train and advise league staff on effective advocacy and relationship-building with their school districts.
- In partnership with the affiliated leagues, lobby local school districts, as needed, to maintain or increase school district funding.
- Develop messaging materials that the affiliated leagues can use with their school districts and school principals.
- Develop and implement a communications strategy designed to raise the visibility of urban debate with educators and school administrators.

### **3. Metrics**

- In FY 2012, the affiliated leagues begin to collect and contribute at least some post-high school achievement data on their former urban debaters; by FY 2014 the affiliated leagues collect and contribute college enrollment data for 75 percent of the urban debaters who graduated from high school earlier that year.

- By FY 2013, 100 percent of the affiliated leagues obtain aggregate data on the academic achievement of the students in their leagues.
- By FY 2014, research studies are underway in at least three affiliated leagues.
- In the aggregate, the affiliated leagues maintain their school district funding, using a baseline of 2011-12 levels.

## J. Supporting Goal No. 5

With support from the NAUDL Governing Board, establish a diversified, sustainable national base of support.

### 1. Rationale

In order to implement this plan, the NAUDL must raise more money. The NAUDL currently receives most of its funding from board members and an annual special event. With this plan, it has an opportunity to raise more money through new donors and funders. In the current economic climate, it is difficult for any nonprofit to increase its fundraising revenue. The NAUDL can succeed, but only if its Governing Board works with the staff on fundraising.

### 2. Strategic Directions and Action Steps

Strategic Direction A: Build long-term relationships with national foundations and secure funding to support major programmatic initiatives, including the following:

- *League Development.* Seek funding for the training and technical assistance program and the creation of a web-based resource center for leagues.
- *Coach Training.* Seek funding for development and implementation of a coach training program for all leagues.
- *Middle School Debate.* Seek funding to support the development of middle school debate programs in the leagues.
- *Research and Evaluation.* Seek funding for major research studies on the impact of urban debate on student academic achievement in at least three leagues.
- *Communications and Advocacy.* Seek funding for development and implementation of a communications and advocacy strategy highlighting the role of urban debate in improving educational outcomes. By raising awareness about the benefits of urban debate, the NAUDL and its leagues will be able to recruit more students, coaches, schools and school districts.

Strategic Direction B: Build long-term relationships with corporations and law firms.

- Continue to secure corporate sponsors for the Urban Debate National Championship.
- Continue to generate revenue from corporations and law firms by selling tables for the NAUDL Annual Dinner.

Strategic Direction C: Continue to strengthen the NAUDL's Governing Board and Young Professional Leadership Board.

- Continue to diversify the NAUDL Governing Board.
- Continue to expand the membership of the Young Professional Leadership Board and to develop opportunities for its members to work with the NAUDL.

Strategic Direction D: Build relationships with individual donors.

- Develop and implement a Major Gifts Campaign.
- Continue to conduct an Annual Campaign.
- Develop and implement a plan to identify new potential donors.
- Improve communications with individual donors.

Strategic Direction E: Explore opportunities for joint fundraising with the affiliated leagues.

### 3. Metrics

- Every year, every NAUDL Governing Board member makes a financial contribution to the NAUDL.
- In FY 2012, the NAUDL increases the total amount of revenue raised by 33 percent, as compared to the FY 2011 budget. In each of the next four fiscal years, the NAUDL increases the amount of revenue raised by another 10 percent.
- In FY 2012, the NAUDL generates 25 percent of its revenue from new sources (foundations, corporations, and individual donors) compared to the previous year. In each of the next two fiscal years, the NAUDL increases the amount of revenue raised from new sources by 10 percent.
- By FY 2014, the NAUDL's retention rate for non-board individual donors is 80 percent.
- By FY 2014, the NAUDL generates 20 percent of its revenue from foundations; 35 percent from corporations and law firms; and 45 percent from non-board individuals.

### **III. Conclusion**

The NAUDL's goal is to triple the number of urban debaters in the next five years. The NAUDL Governing Board and its staff believe that while this goal is ambitious, it is also achievable. The board is committed to achieving this goal through a multifaceted strategy which includes: strengthening and supporting the existing leagues; expanding programming into middle schools and the classroom; continuing to build new leagues; conducting long term research on the impact of debate on the futures of urban youth; and more effectively communicating the benefits of debate to students, teachers, principals and school administrators.

## IV. Appendix

### Strategic Planning Terms

