



YEAR IN REVIEW

COLORADO COLLEGE SPEECH & DEBATE TEAM 2025-2026

COLORADO COLLEGE

COMPETITIVE COMMUNICATIONS



2025-2026 SEASON OVERVIEW

This year has been one of the most exciting and successful seasons in recent memory for the Colorado College Speech & Debate Team. From the first tournament in October to our final rounds in April, our students demonstrated not only competitive excellence but also the resilience, teamwork, and intellectual curiosity that define this program.

TEAM PERFORMANCE

We opened the season at **Lewis & Clark College**, where CC made an immediate statement.

- **Two Open teams — Zara Zafar & Sophia Murphy and Paolo LoGerfo & Toby Meier — reached semifinals**, a remarkable early-season showing.
- In JV, **Landon Hartman & Henry Schmidt advanced all the way to finals**, and
- CC swept **five speaker awards**, highlighting the depth of talent across the squad.

Momentum carried into November at the **University of Vermont**, where **Zara and Sophia reached the Open final round**, and **Paolo and Toby secured another semifinal appearance**. Toby also earned **Rookie Speaker**, a testament to his rapid growth and commitment.

December brought more success at **Seattle University**, with **Lucas Cahow and Sandro Metreveli breaking to semifinals in Novice**, closing out the fall with strong performances from our newest debaters.

The spring semester began with a standout weekend at **Loyola University Chicago**, where CC dominated the novice division:

- **Stella Epstein & Landon Hartman were crowned Novice Champions**,
- **Jacob Durso & Lucas Cahow finished as Novice Runners-Up**, and
- Landon added a **5th-place speaker award** to cap off the team's strongest novice showing of the year.

We closed the season with appearances at the **North American Universities Debate Championship** and **UC Berkeley**, where **Zara and Sophia once again reached elimination rounds, finishing as quarter-finalists** in the most competitive field of debaters we faced all season.



MEET OUR CAPTAINS



Zara (left) and Sophia (right).

This season, we are proud to be led by two extraordinary captains, **Zara Zafar** and **Sophia Murphy**, whose dedication, competitive excellence, and unwavering commitment to their teammates have shaped the heart of our program.

Zara is the team's helm — the guiding force who sets our course with clarity, strategy, and purpose. Her competitive record speaks for itself: finals and semifinals at major tournaments, consistent Open-level success, and a reputation for sharp analysis and calm, decisive thinking. Zara leads by example, approaching each round with intellectual rigor and each practice with a commitment to elevating the entire squad.

Sophia is our anchor — steady, grounding, and unwavering in her support for the team. As a captain, she is as committed to building team culture as she is to competitive success. Sophia's achievements this season, including multiple Open finals and deep elimination-round runs with her partner, Zara, speak to her talent; her mentorship of younger debaters speaks to her character. She is the first to offer encouragement, and the person teammates turn to when they need encouragement or clarity.

Together, **Zara and Sophia** embody the balance that defines great leadership: one charting the path forward, the other ensuring we stay centered and connected. Their partnership has strengthened our team in every way — competitively, intellectually, and personally — and we look forward to having them continue to lead us next season!

FUTURE GOALS

As we celebrate an outstanding year, we are already looking ahead to the opportunities and challenges of next season. Our goals reflect both the competitive momentum we've built and the values that define Colorado College Speech & Debate.

“Next season, I am looking forward to deepening my knowledge of histories outside the US, as well as the current international relations beyond the US. I am also excited about traveling more with the team and can't wait to make more memories!” – Rising 2nd Year Debater

1. Deepen our competitive bench across all divisions With strong performances this year, we aim to continue developing a deep, confident roster capable of breaking at every tournament. Building a sustainable pipeline of new debaters remains a top priority.

2. Strengthen our presence at major national tournaments This season showed that CC can consistently reach elimination rounds at highly competitive events. Next year, we plan to expand our travel schedule and target additional national-level tournaments to give our students more opportunities to compete at the highest level.

3. Invest in skill development and specialized training We will continue refining our curriculum for argumentation, research, and speaking, adding more targeted workshops on strategy and judge adaptation. Our goal is to ensure every student feels prepared, supported, and confident in round.

4. Expand community and alumni engagement Our alumni network is one of our greatest strengths. Next year, we hope to create more opportunities for alumni to connect with current students — through mentorship and community events that celebrate the legacy of CC Speech & Debate.

5. Foster a team culture rooted in curiosity, collaboration, and joy Competitive success matters, but the heart of our program is the community our students build together. We remain committed to cultivating a supportive environment where find joy in the activity and one another.

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT



Paolo (right) and his partner, Toby.

This season, we celebrate **Paolo LoGerfo**, a senior whose presence has shaped the Colorado College Speech & Debate Team in ways that extend far beyond competitive success. Paolo has been a cornerstone of our program — a debater whose intellectual agility, unrelenting humor, and quiet determination elevated everyone around him.

Paolo's competitive record speaks for itself. Despite only beginning his debate career in the Spring of 2025, Paolo reached **Open Semifinals at both Lewis & Clark and the University of Vermont**. But what made Paolo exceptional was not just his results, but his wit. Humor is Paolo's way of putting people at ease and it is one of the reasons he's excelled in intercollegiate debate: even when navigating the most divisive topics, Paolo manages to make the whole room laugh. In those moments, we're reminded of our shared humanity — that beneath our differences, we all long to connect. It is for all these reasons (and more) that Paolo was this year's recipient of the Apollonian Award.

We are immensely proud of all Paolo has accomplished and excited to see the impact he will have in the years ahead!

COACH'S REFLECTION

As I look back on this season, what stands out most is not just the competitive success — though our students certainly gave us plenty to celebrate — but the way this team grew together. Week after week, I watched students challenge themselves, support one another, and step into roles they might not have imagined at the start of the year. Debate is an activity that asks a lot of young people: resilience after tough rounds, humility in victory, curiosity in preparation, and trust in their partners and teammates. This year, our students embodied all of it.

From the first tournament in October to our final rounds in April, the team showed a level of commitment and joy that made every long travel day and late-night prep session worth it. Our seniors led with steadiness and generosity; our novices brought energy, humor, and a willingness to learn; and our returning debaters pushed themselves to new heights. The results we earned — finals, semifinals, speaker awards, and deep runs at major tournaments — were the product of that collective effort.

What I am most proud of, though, is the culture this team continues to build. A culture where students celebrate each other's breakthroughs, where feedback is given with care, where laughter is as common as strategy talk, and where everyone feels they have a place. That is the foundation that makes competitive success possible, and it is the legacy that will carry us into next season.

Listen well and argue better,



Dr. Jillian Jaeger
Speech & Debate Coach



OUR THANKS TO YOU.

To our alumni: thank you for being part of this story. Your support, mentorship, and belief in this program continue to shape the team in ways you may not always see but that we feel every day.

We are proud of what this team accomplished — and even more excited for what comes next. With the continued support of our alumni, we are confident that next season will be our strongest yet!



UNTIL NEXT YEAR!