

Leadership

Board of Directors Fall Minutes

Richmond, VA
September 26-27, 2025

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/RECORD OF APPROVED MINUTES

The NSDA Board of Directors held its fall meeting September 26-27, in Richmond, VA. President Arthur called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Members in attendance were Byron Arthur, Jamelle Brown, Sara Gibson, David Huston, Adam Jacobi, Erez Kalir, Renee Motter, Esther Oyetunji, Jay Rye, Joshua Swartsel, Wendy Orthman, and Holly Williams. Anoop Mishra joined at 2:00 p.m. on Friday.

MISSION MOMENT, ICE BREAKER, AND PRESIDENTIAL CHARGE

This moment is designed to set the tone for the meeting and purposefully remind all present of our mission, vision, values, and goals as we deliberate and conduct business on behalf of our current and future membership.

REVIEW MEMBERSHIP CORRESPONDENCE

In accordance with our goal of increased membership engagement, letters submitted to the Board were included in meeting materials to inform the Board of ideas, requests, and concerns that have been submitted for consideration. This was an opportunity to highlight, clarify briefly, and/or frame action items on the docket in light of these submissions.

LEGAL/CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS

Each Board meeting includes time allotted for relevant updates on any pending legal matters or other business that requires discussion in executive session.

STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES, BRIEFINGS, AND Q&A

All Board members had an opportunity to review prior standing committee meeting minutes and pose any questions. Each chair took a brief moment to discuss their committee's priorities and plans for the upcoming year.

STANDING AND AD HOC COMMITTEE MINUTES AND Q&A

Members submitted questions about the prior standing and ad hoc committee minutes. Chairs provided updates not covered later in the meeting.

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE/STRATEGIC FEEDBACK/BOARD ROLE IN GROWTH CAMPAIGN

The staff leadership team facilitated a series of discussions related to the new five-year strategic growth plan. These discussions were designed to provide valuable thought leadership and insight from Board members as the staff embarks on further development and execution of the plan. The conversation primarily centered around the best ways the organization can uphold its core values while ensuring that NSDA sponsored competitions remain a free and open marketplace of ideas that values viewpoint diversity.

HONORARY MEMBERSHIP PROPOSAL

Moved by Jacobi, seconded by Rye:

"Approve the motion to allow all active member schools to issue one honorary membership per year as part of their membership."

Passed: 11-0 (Arthur, Brown, Gibson, Huston, Jacobi, Motter, Orthman, Oyetunji, Rye, Swartsel, Williams)

The Board considered and approved a proposal by the staff to streamline the honorary membership system to all active member schools to issue one honorary membership per year, regardless of the size of the program.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Moved by Jacobi, seconded by Swartzel:

“Approve the proposed new equity statement.”

Passed: 12-0 (Arthur, Brown, Gibson, Huston, Jacobi, Kalir, Motter, Orthman, Oyetunji, Rye, Swartzel, Williams)

Moved by Oyetunji, seconded by Huston:

“Accept the proposed new definition of equity.”

Passed: 12-0 (Arthur, Brown, Gibson, Huston, Jacobi, Kalir, Motter, Orthman, Oyetunji, Rye, Swartzel, Williams)

Moved by Jacobi, seconded by Gibson:

“Applaud the work of the Student Leadership Council (SLC) and the SLC Declaration.”

Passed: 12-0 (Arthur, Brown, Gibson, Huston, Jacobi, Kalir, Motter, Orthman, Oyetunji, Rye, Swartzel, Williams)

Dr. Paul Porter, Director of Belonging and Inclusion, invited the Board to reflect on his FY25 Executive Summary, which outlined and assessed the ongoing efforts of the organization in affirming its core values, including equity. Dr. Porter offered rationale for language changes to the organization’s definition of equity and its equity statement. The Board approved the proposed updated language. Staff also shared the Student Leadership Council’s new SLC Declaration with the Board (*below*).

Definition of Equity: “A member shares the responsibility to uphold policies and practices that create conditions of fairness and respect in speech and debate—ensuring consistent access, treatment, and opportunity by reducing barriers and encouraging full participation.”

Equity Statement: “The National Speech & Debate Association is committed to fostering a safe, welcoming environment, free from harassment and discrimination. We will continue to heed and learn in pursuit of our goals: removing barriers, building confidence, and ensuring that everyone has a place in our activity.”

Student Leadership Council Declaration:

“The Student Leadership Council advocates for equity, amplifies student voices, and develops initiatives that directly support the speech and debate community. We embrace speech and debate as more than competition—it is a transformative activity that sparks growth, confidence, and connection. We lead with innovation and care to make the community more enriching and inclusive for all.”

FY25 END OF YEAR BUDGET REPORT/ FY26 FINAL BUDGET APPROVAL

Moved by Motter, seconded by Brown:

“Accept the FY25 Budget Report.”

Passed: 12-0 (Arthur, Brown, Gibson, Huston, Jacobi, Mishra, Motter, Orthman, Oyetunji, Rye, Swartzel, Williams)

Moved by Brown, seconded by Rye:

“Approve the amended FY26 Final Budget.”

Passed: 12-0 (Arthur, Brown, Gibson, Huston, Jacobi, Mishra, Motter, Orthman, Oyetunji, Rye, Swartzel, Williams)

The Executive Director and related staff leadership answered questions related to the FY25 Budget Report. The Internal Affairs Committee sought approval of the FY25 Budget Report. The Executive Director and related staff leadership responded to questions regarding the proposed FY26 Final Budget. In May, the Board approved an FY26 pre-budget. The Internal Affairs Committee, in collaboration with the Executive Director, proposed any appropriate amendments to the pre-budget based on the FY25 end of year budget actuals. The Internal Affairs Committee sought approval for the proposed amended FY26 Final Budget.

RECESS

Moved by Jacobi, seconded by Brown:

“Recess for the evening.”

Passed: 12-0 (Arthur, Brown, Gibson, Huston, Jacobi, Mishra, Motter, Orthman, Oyetunji, Rye, Swartzel, Williams)

The meeting recessed at 4:30 p.m. on Friday.

RECONVENE/CALL TO ORDER

President Arthur called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FY24-FY25 EVALUATION

The Board finalized the performance review of Executive Director J. Scott Wunn, which occurs every odd-numbered year and spans fiscal years 2024 and 2025. Board members had the opportunity to share their observations, shaping a review that highlighted areas of competence and areas for improvement.

NATIONAL TOURNAMENT REVIEW AND FUTURE PLANNING

The Executive Director discussed various feedback received on the 2025 National Tournament, as well as the Executive Director's and staff's takeaways. This included a briefing on the organization's ongoing efforts to ensure a safe National Tournament experience for all attendees in 2026. In closed session, the Board discussed the incident involving registered attendee Jayden Roccoforte's unauthorized breach of the stage during the final round of Humorous Interpretation and the resulting panic and mass evacuation of the venue. The Executive Director shared actions that have already been taken to both assess the circumstances surrounding the event and options being considered to ensure appropriate security measures are in place throughout the event. The Executive Director will provide the next National Tournament protocols briefing at the Board's December online meeting. The NSDA will inform its members of the new procedures as they are finalized.

For his role in the 2025 incident, Jayden Roccoforte has been suspended indefinitely from participation in any NSDA sponsored activities, including any NSDA District and/or National Tournaments, as well as denied access to NSDA services, including registration at speechanddebate.org and tabroom.com. His lifetime membership in the National Speech & Debate Association has, accordingly, been suspended to allow for due process as mandated in the NSDA Bylaws.

BOARD CALENDAR REVIEW

The Board reviewed the remaining scheduled Board meetings and locations for the fiscal year, discussing any concerns or conflicts that may arise.

EQUITY PAUSE

To be consistent and intentional about incorporating the [NSDA Equity Lens](#), a moment was added at the end of each day to consider questions from this lens that may be relevant to the conversation.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m. on Saturday. 

QUESTIONS? CONCERNS? IDEAS?

We want to hear from you! Send your feedback to board@speechanddebate.org.