



To **B**uild, **L**aunch, **U**timize and **E**ducate using **C**ubeSats

November 17, 2019

To whom it may concern,

It is my distinct privilege to nominate and endorse Shawna L. Christenson for the Nation Speech and Debate Association Educator of the Year. Not only has she honorably served as President of the Palm Beach County Middle School Forensic League for the past three years, trained hundreds of students, and supported countless advocacy, outreach, and community efforts; but she also brought her adroitly trained students out of the tournament chambers and into the real-world. For the past two years, her students frequently engaged the U.S. Congress, were selected to present at numerous international events, represented the United States overseas in an international competition, and been invited to present their work at the White house.

Shawna is a key reason for the successes of the highlighted media links below. Her students now are routinely invited to present, exhibit, and compete at national and international gatherings. Shawna has transformed her student's involvement in Speech and Debate into opportunities to develop and pursue state legislation for education reform, engage in Congressional legislation with the U.S. Congress, and strive to make the real world better.

The reasons for Shawna's selection are easily matched to your criteria for this award. To summarize they include "impact... in and beyond the classroom", "providing support to others in the field of speech and debate education", modeling the Code of Ethics, and providing opportunities that exemplify the five core values of equity, integrity, respect, leadership, and service both within and beyond the walls of their classroom. Shawna has led her middle school debate students not only to success within debate tournaments locally and nationally, but she has prepared and led students to advocate, to compete, and to create federal legislation. Please consider these recent examples of Shawna's expertise and dedication in training her students to debate, but also to engage in real-world advocacy, public policy, outreach, and international activities.

Shawna and her students worked with their Congressman to create House Resolution 109, which advocated for expanded use of CubeSats as a disruptive education tool. They were also invited to D.C. to sit in the Gallery when Congressman Mast introduced the Resolution with bipartisan support. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4716406/repmast-weissat-1-res> and <https://mast.house.gov/weissat>. Her students were invited to present their work at the White House Office of Science and Technology in February 2019. The White House posted a tweet concerning her visit here: <https://twitter.com/WHOSTP/status/1100546452647014400>.

During the summer of 2019 Shawna organized and trained the eventual U.S. Champion of the Future Space Scholars Meet (FSSM) competition. As U.S. Champions, she escorted her team to Beijing where they competed with ~280 other students in an English-presentation event. They finished as runners-up and one of her American students was selected to as one of only three to receive a Superior Science Practice Award. <https://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/20190927/weiss-school->

[students-to-travel-to-china-for-spacecompetition](#) and <https://cbs12.com/news/local/palm-beach-county-studentsrepresent-us-in-international-aerospace-competition>

She not only was selected as a prestigious Space Foundation Teacher Liaison in 2018, she has conceived, created, and hosted a TEDx event at her school, which included presentations made by her current and former students. Shawna edited an entire edition of the STEAM online magazine, where she also authored an article regarding her advocacy program with Congress. As an educational ambassador Shawna helped to create and support the National Space Society's international debate competition. Since 2018 she has trained students which have competed in the International Space Development Conference's Student Debate Competition.

She was selected in 2018 by the Florida Space Grant Consortium as a principal investigator for the Equipping Students and Teachers in Engineering and Entrepreneurial Modalities grant. Her aim is to enable Public School teachers access to authentic aerospace resources and experiences. She conducted training for numerous teachers over multiple sessions in the summer and fall of 2019. She has met with and presented learning opportunities directly to the District Superintendent of Palm Beach County, which is responsible for almost 200,000 students.

Finally, Shawna received a Certificate of Special Recognition from the United States Senate in 2017. The above accomplishments clearly demonstrate that she and her students have excelled at all levels, from local to international. They are engaging in the real-world with the skills learned and honed during their experiences in Shawna's Speech and Debate program. What better testimony could an organization ask?

For the past five plus years she has built and led the Communications Center of Excellence at the Weiss School, and continues to advance opportunities for her students, her colleagues, and fellow teachers in Florida. You will not find a better qualified representative of the ideals of the NSDA. I hope you will contact me directly should you require any additional information or clarification.

Respectfully,



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Listed as a Rising Star in Aviation Week - <https://aviationweek.com/apollo/next-generation-reflects-meaningapollo>  
<https://www.9and10news.com/2019/06/01/michigan-space-forum-in-traverse-city-allows-students-to-showwork-to-industry-professionals/>  
<https://www.tallahassee.com/story/news/2019/02/19/florida-space-day-capitol/2915912002/>  
<https://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/20190426/gardens-middle-school-students-building-second-satellite-tolaunch-into-space>  
<https://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/20181220/gardens-middle-school-students-satellite-launched-into-space>  
<https://www.nasa.gov/feature/nasa-mission-supports-launch-of-cubesats-built-by-middle-and-high-schoolstudents>  
<https://www.wptv.com/amp/article/student-created-satellite-makes-it-onto-spacex-launch/25384613>  
<https://www.nasa.gov/feature/nasa-announces-eighth-class-of-candidates-for-launch-of-cubesat-space-missions>  
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