### 2009-2010 At A Glance

- Hosted on-campus debates with other clubs
- **Instituted Public Speaking Program with Liberty Partnerships Program**
  - Program targeted public speaking skills among both ‘at-risk’ Poughkeepsie Middle School students and Marist Students.
  - Both groups show improvement in 7-week program.
- Re-designed our club and competitive team.

### Coming in 2010-2011

**Students earn priority points by getting involved!**

- Liberty Partnerships Program partnership to continue in 2010-2011. Get involved & make a difference in Poughkeepsie kids lives!
- Debuting “The Fox Nation”—a half-hour multi-media current events program live on WMAR & Podcast online. Follow the program & get involved by contributing stories & opinions
- Hosting a campus-wide speaking competition on the eve of the 2010 election. Compete for cash prizes!
- Debating Mental Health care with an opportunity on campus to compete against debaters from other colleges.
- Continuing our campus club debate series—create an event with the MDAS

### Get Involved!

Contact Dr. Audra Diers  
audra.diers@marist.edu

*We’re also interested in faculty and staff involvement!*

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### Society, LPP create successful “Speech Camp”

The Marist Debate and Advocacy Society joined forces with the Liberty Partnerships Program (LPP) for the 2009-2010 school year creating a seven-week speech camp in conjunction with the LPP’s spring mentoring program. Society members taught LPP students basic argumentation skills using topics relevant to the middle schools. The camp ended with a public speaking competition held in the Nelli Golleti Theatre at Marist with students’ family and friends attending. Preliminary research on the camp’s effectiveness indicates the camp and mentoring directly benefitted both the LPP and Marist students participating.

Since 1985 programs like the Urban Debate League have focused on the value of introducing public speaking and argumentation skills to students in urban and “at-risk” environments. These students tend to perform better in school, develop better critical thinking skills, and are more likely to go onto post-secondary education and training.

Poughkeepsie does not have any program like the Urban Debate League, which is why sophomore MDAS member Lauren Hall and adviser Dr. Audra Diers, Assistant Professor of Public Relations in the School of Communication approached the LPP’s Director, Susan Repko, in the fall of 2009 to begin to implement an active argumentation and speaking program targeting the Poughkeepsie students who are in the most need of such a program.

Diers, who had been involved for a decade in intercollegiate debate and now advises the Society, developed a curriculum for the program based in core argumentation concepts and designed to build efficacy—confidence—in both the LPP and Marist students’ saying that, “If we can create an environment where all of the participants experience successes, critically evaluate the outcomes of that program, we create a program that serves both the LPP and Marist students.”

On the final day of the mentoring program, 14 8th graders spoke on stage on topics ranging from the educational benefits of video games to what it means to be a friend, to suggestions on improving their school environments.

Dean of the School of Communication, Dr. Steve Ralston, Diers, and Repko all judged the competition noting how difficult it was to select a winner from a group of very strong speeches. Diers remarked that these speeches really reflected the argumentation concepts indicating that not only were the LPP students doing a great job, but the Marist students did an exceptional job of engaging the 8th graders and working with them. Repko said of the competition, “It took a lot of courage for the students...but all participated with enthusiasm.”

In order to determine program effectiveness, the LPP students, mentors, and MDAS coaches were surveyed at the beginning and end of the program to evaluate the degree to which the program met its goals. Based on a preliminary assessment of the data, LPP students show substantial gains in:

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- confidence in earning respect when they speak, confidence in building interpersonal respect, and social confidence. Marist students show substantial gains in their communication confidence across all contexts in which they might be asked to speak.

The MDAS and LPP are planning to repeat the program for the 2010-2011. Students interested in participating should contact either Susan Repko or Audra Diers for information about this or any MDAS program or event. In August, join us on Facebook at Marist Debate and Advocacy Society or The Fox Nation.