

Debate Team Earns Top National Awards

Claiming first place among community colleges, the Lee College Debate Team delivered an outstanding performance at the 2026 International Public Debate Association (IPDA) National Championship Tournament & Convention on April 10-13 in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The three-day event brought together 52 programs and more than 300 undergraduate competitors from across the country, featuring team and individual debate events, along with convention panels and academic paper presentations. The award-winning Lee College team included Ruben Capetillo, Kaeddis Cole, Giovanni Garcia, Madison Hall, Tara Rambaran, Jacob Rosas, and Advita Shinde.

Individually, Kaeddis Cole advanced to the double octofinals in the junior varsity division, finishing among the top 32 competitors, while Jacob Rosas reached the octofinals in the novice division, placing among the top 16.

The team's success extended beyond individual results, earning top honors among community colleges. Team captain Madison Hall emphasized the broader impact of the experience, noting that while competition matters, the true value of debate lies in the growth, skills, and lasting memories students gain along the way.

"Our students consistently demonstrated commitment throughout the year, balancing everyday responsibilities while continuing to refine their skills," said Jerry McCauley, Lee College's assistant debate coach. "That steady effort led to success both individually and as a team, culminating in recognition as the top community college at the national tournament. Their achievements reflect not just talent, but genuine dedication and the strong bonds they built together."

In addition to their performance at nationals, the team earned a second-place seasonal award, recognizing consistent success throughout the academic year.

Pictured: Ruben Capetillo, Kaeddis Cole, Giovanni Garcia, Madison Hall, Tara Rambaran, Jacob Rosas, and Advita Shinde.