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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Clark Honors College Cancels 2025 Robert D. Clark High School Invitational Tournament**

EUGENE, Ore. 10/8/2025 — With deep regret, the Oregon Forensics program announces that it will be unable to host the annual **Robert D. Clark High School Invitational Tournament** this year.

The tournament, one of the oldest continually running and most respected high school speech and debate competitions west of the Mississippi, brought together generations of young speakers, coaches, and alumni to Eugene for more than half a century. **In recent years, it has drawn more than 400 students and 200 teachers and parents from over 30 schools across Oregon, Washington, California, Idaho, Texas, and Hawaii — making it one of the largest and most vibrant invitational tournaments in the region.** Campus visits by high-achieving high school students have long been considered one of the strongest predictors of enrollment at the University of Oregon.

This difficult decision follows the Clark Honors College's **abrupt elimination of the Forensics program** just two weeks before the start of the academic year. The returning students have been instructed that they may continue only under a **"club model"** — an arrangement that lacks the staffing, funding, and institutional support necessary to host a tournament of this scale.

"Without a formal program, it is simply impossible to provide the structure and oversight that make the Clark Invitational a success," said **Trond Jacobsen**, Director of Forensics, who will continue in that role until the program is officially discontinued in December.

"This is not just the loss of a tournament—it's the loss of an Oregon tradition that inspired generations of students to lead, listen, and learn. It eliminates one of our most effective recruiting pipelines and sends an unfortunate signal to students across the country about the kinds of experiences they can enjoy at Oregon."

Beyond the University, the cancellation creates real hardship for **high school speech and debate programs** across the Pacific Northwest — especially those in the **Eugene and Springfield area**, which have long relied on the mentorship, judging, and coaching support provided by UO Forensics students. For many of these teams, the Clark Invitational served as both a highlight of their competitive season and a vital source of community connection. The absence of the tournament leaves a significant gap in their schedules and in the broader educational ecosystem that helps develop young civic leaders.

High school senior **Sophie Megy** reflected on what the tournament meant to her:

“The U of O high school debate tournament had always been what inspired me to go to U of O. It gave me, and so many other high school students, an amazing experience. If U of O Forensics shrinks, not only will so many high schoolers lose a valuable experience, but I likely won’t be applying to go there next year.”

Oregon’s annual high school tournament has long been a cornerstone of the regional debate calendar, uniting schools from across the state — from the coast to Bend, Portland, and Southern Oregon. Its absence is a devastating setback not only for local students but also for the University’s long tradition of civic education and public discourse.

“Everyone looked forward to it as the highlight of the year,” said **Tommy Douglass**, a McMinnville native and 2024 Clark Honors College graduate who is now preparing to enter law school after serving with AmeriCorps. “Friends and competitors from across the state at a huge tournament and our flagship university. For many of us, it was our first experience on a large campus. It was electric. Those experiences are a large reason I came to Oregon and entered the Clark Honors College. The loss of the tournament feels like a terrible mistake.”

“From being a competitor in high school in Oregon in the nineties, and coaching at the high school level since 2001, the UO tournament has always been a key part of the high school speech and debate experience,” said **Ameena Amdahl-Mason**, head coach at Clackamas High School. “I’ve had more students share fond memories of this tournament than any other. Many chose the University of Oregon specifically because of their great experiences there. My students are devastated to lose it this year.”

Oregon Forensics Forever continues to advocate for the **full reinstatement of the program**, emphasizing its 150-year legacy of academic excellence, leadership development, and public service.

“While this decision brings real heartbreak to our community, our resolve is unshaken,” Director Jacobsen continued. “We will continue fighting for the future of Oregon Forensics — so that this proud tradition of service to students and our state continues for the next 150 years.”

**About Oregon Forensics Forever:** Oregon Forensics Forever is an alumni-led movement dedicated to preserving and promoting the University of Oregon’s 150-year legacy of speech and debate. Through advocacy, fundraising, and community partnerships, the organization supports opportunities for students to develop leadership, communication, and civic engagement skills through competitive forensics. Learn more at [OregonForensics.com](https://OregonForensics.com).

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