

# DEBATE MASTERS

GRIFFITH VERTICAN, JUNIOR

ANDREW HOAG, SENIOR

*Major: Communications  
Emphasis: Public address*

*Career Goals: Debate coach/adjunct professor and/or international human rights advocate*

*What's Next: One more year of school and debate at PLNU*

*Can't Live Without: Mountain Dew, MySpace and mountain biking*

*Funny Forensics Moment: Drinking a Diet Pepsi during a debate ... to make a point, of course*

*Why He Debates: "We can make a difference. It all comes down to being a voice. And it all starts now."*

*Favorite Quote: "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." – Dr. Seuss, The Lorax*

*Major: Literature  
Emphasis: English education*

*Career Goal: Professor*

*What's Next: Grad school in American literature*

*Can't Live Without: Sleep, food and football*

*("oxygen is included in football")*

*Funny Forensics Moment: Debating in a pirate costume*

*Why He Debates: "The chance to get to argue competitively is really exciting...It's really a game."*

*Favorite Quote: "People don't judge you by the size of your feet, but by whether your socks match."*

*– Space Ghost*

Are alternative energy sources a practical option? Should high school sex education classes teach abstinence only or abstinence and "safe sex"? Who would make a better security force for Iraq: the X-Men or Jack Bauer from the TV show 24? If you're not sure, Point Loma's forensic team captains, Andrew Hoag and Griffith Vertican, can probably convince you (it's definitely Jack Bauer by the way, according to the duo's recent debate victory). Andrew and Griffith are standout members of a forensics team that competes valiantly with the top speech and debate schools in the country. They win as a team. They win as a pair. They win individually. So who are these masters of debate? Why do they do what they do? And what's next on their agendas?

Under the tutelage of Skip Rutledge, director of forensics and communications professor, both Andrew and Griffith have flourished. They both chose PLNU based in large part on the outstanding national reputation of the debate team here, and both have forensics scholarships. Andrew and Griffith have helped raise PLNU's status as a stellar debate school even higher.

"Point Loma's first national championship was my freshman year, and we won two years in a row," Andrew remembers. Winning a national championship from the National Parliamentary Debate Association is an impressive feat, which involves besting teams from top schools, such as UC Berkeley, USC and Notre Dame. Andrew (the football fanatic) equates it to winning an NCAA sports title.

Aside from all the winning, Andrew and Griffith are motivated by the less glamorous, but more far-reaching, benefits of debate.

"It's one of the most real-world and applicable skills you can gain. It teaches you how to communicate with a broad audience and how to communicate with people who disagree with you. It can also broaden your own viewpoint," Griffith explains.

"Debate gets you to care about current events and world issues. It makes you think critically about issues. It also shows you that you can be personally involved, even if it's just by being informed," Andrew confirms. "And debate can be so much fun – I just love doing it," he adds.

Griffith is also quick to point out the value of debate for Christians specifically. He cites Acts 18:27-28, which says, "[Apollos] was a great help to those who by grace had believed. For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ."

"The reason Apollos is a blessing is because he can publicly debate," Griffith explains excitedly. "God can give this ability as a gift so we can be a voice for social injustice." Griffith is passionate about using his rhetorical abilities for advocacy. At the moment, he's particularly motivated to share the plight of child soldiers in Africa, but he is also interested in human rights more broadly.

Like his partner, Andrew is compelled to use his communication gifts

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to help others. He's already coaching a home school high school debate team, tutoring in the Writer's Studio, and working with youth at Del Cerro Baptist Church.

Their success and promise haven't prevented the duo from appreciating those who are helping them on their way. When asked to name a few people who have influenced them, answers were quick to come. Topping both of their lists was their forensics coach, Skip.

"Skip inspires me to do what I do and to work hard at it. He's encouraged me to be a leader and a captain," Andrew explains.

"I almost try to be like his protégé," Griffith adds, smiling. Then, more seriously, he adds, "It's so great to have someone who believes in you...even more than you believe in yourself sometimes."

Andrew also cites Professor Charlene Pate as his inspiration for teaching and Brenda Bing, his girlfriend, for keeping him grounded. For Griffith, it is Sandy Ische, an assistant in the Wellness Center, who quickly came to mind. Sandy proved to be an enormous spiritual encouragement when she gave him a card reminding him that God has the best in store even in times of hardship. The card touched Griffith deeply; it's something he will always remember. He also attributes his success to his close friends, Jose Nunez and Tyler Netherland.

Armed with quick minds and eloquence, the young debate masters are sure to continue making an impact with their gifts and spirit. ■



– C.S.