

# **2015 CQI Debate Report**

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## **Skills and knowledge**

The oral debates is one very particular compared to most other competition done in engineering, unlike most, this competitions main aspect is the art of ease of speech in a non-rehearsed situation. This teaches students to have confidence in front of superiors and hold precedence when speaking in front of a public. Like any great skill the ease of speech is one that only gets better with practice, unfortunately this does not happen often in engineering even if the use of it is high. There are several techniques that can be learnt to help assure a victory such as attacking the gray zone or taking the moral high ground but without practice technique alone will not win you a quality debate. I don't believe this particular competition has really taught me much but more the ensemble of years of doing debates in different competitions such as this one, and the skills I have learnt, such as ease of speech, confidence and precedence I believe will come in handy throughout my life.

## **Lessons learnt**

In the pre-comps to this CQI we trained a few times with Sergio Lando, one of Concordia's most known debaters in the past 5 years. He taught Andrew and me some different ruses to trap the opponents, such as mentioned above, gray zone arguments, as well as some team cohesion, and time management. Time management was one of my biggest issues, 5 minutes is short and if the time is not well used, it can come as a major downfall to a team. Furthermore, the appeal to personal experience, even if not real is always a good alibi. What I mean by this is that the judges don't know your life story, so if you make up some stories, which are believable, to support your point no one will question them and this will lead to empathy to your cause. With those emotions the debater must convey the appearance desired, both in his vestment style, his posture and tone of voice. From what I have learnt in this particular competition is that it is dominated with people trying to impress the judges. But when the mass all try to do it becomes the norm. My partner Andrew demonstrated in this particular competition that sometimes going against the norms causes more shock and may actually be favorable. To conclude, as in the skills attained, the lessons learnt are not solely due to this exclusive competition but an accumulation of several competitions and trainings. The main lessons learnt are in the management of time, management of feelings and a lot of appearance can go a long way.

## **Meaning of the competition**

As a third year debater I have a lot of effort and commitment to this competition. It's a competition that I hold at heart because I believe it demonstrates the skills most engineers lack, and succeeding in such a competition implies a superiority and evolution of the socially awkward norm of what being

an engineering student implies. I have tried to start a debates club last year with little success and little implication from the engineering world but hope that next year a Concordia wide club could be started looking at several types of debates, because no, the ones done at CQI are far from the general types of debates. Overall debates and CQI is an opportunity for engineers and other students to burst out of their bubble and learn a skill rarely taught in school. Furthermore it is a competition that works a muscle that will be used in several occasions in life even if not directly related to the work one will do in his career.

### **ECA pros and cons**

To reiterate, unlike other sub-competitions of CQI the organization of the team needs to be done differently. To begin the search to a good debate team should be done much earlier. Choosing the best debate team for the school cannot be done in one day, it must span on several days and should incorporate a learning group as well as a competitive aspect to it, as goal to make it a learning experience rather than just a competition. One of the main flaws this year was that the debaters were put one against each other but with no real motivation or strategy of selection. In my opinion the selection should be 4 days including different styles of debates as well as solo debates and improvised speeches to see the well roundedness of the competitors as well as their sportsmanship. This would also allow new debaters to learn about the competition as well as feel less intimidated to join. Furthermore, since this is a competition of practice makes perfect, more practices should be prompted by the organizer, practicing with different schools or different debaters to accommodate style changes, being able to see variations of attack styles is necessary and was not focused at enough. It must be said that the overall organization of the event was well done and having organized this event in prior years I know that the debate team is a hard one to organize in general. The receptiveness of students doing debates is often very little making them hard to work with, or control, and yes, we are the brats of most competition, but we are brats that do what needs to be done to win and often it's easier just to go along and not ask questions then try and block the thinking wheel. As well the use of bringing in an ex-debater such as Lando was a great plus but more ex-debaters should have been brought in. for example David Brault and Mathieu Bouchard could have brought forward a lot more aspects that Sergio did not. Maybe bringing in someone from another school and seeing the francophone aspect to the competition. To conclude the overall organization of the event was well done and the main flaws were in the details.

PS. Pissing off your only winning team is also not a winning formula.