

We, the undersigned members of the Brooks Quimby Debate Council (BQDC) board, view it as our elected responsibility to maintain the operations and integrity of this Debate Council. In the fulfillment of this responsibility over the past year, we have found that the current Director of Debate, Professor Sammi Rippetoe, is actively obstructing the team's ability to maintain an inclusive culture and compete. No previous members of the BQDC have attended practice this semester and we believe that the current situation is unsustainable. Thus, we have sought to produce this letter to express our concerns in writing.

#### 1. Facilitating an uncomfortable, harmful, and inequitable team culture

As the BQDC, we have made great strides in recent years to create a positive team culture that welcomes any Bates student interested in joining. Throughout post-covid reconstruction, many measures have been taken to strive for inclusivity, diversity, and respect.

The BQDC prides itself on being welcoming to everyone. Over the course of the previous semester, however, the Director of Debate has not acted according to these standards nor those outlined in Bates' Equity & Inclusion Policy. We have observed and overheard many instances of harmful, disparaging, or discriminatory actions and have felt their effects:

- Reading personal emails from other members of the BQDC and students in her classes to senior members of the team, gossiping about them, and referring to the students as “cringe” and “stupid.”
- Telling members of the team that she wished other students would drop out of the BQDC or her classes without any legitimate concerns.
- Fostering a toxic culture among first years by publically making demeaning comments about them. For example, by referring to a novice debater as “gross” to another novice debater.
- Making disparaging remarks about the body odor of a South Asian debater to the rest of the team when they left the room.
- Mishandling conversations surrounding equity complaints and creating an uncomfortable and unprofessional environment for relevant parties.
- Forcing students to justify her selection decisions to other students and share personal information that would not have been comfortable sharing otherwise.

#### 2. Failure to perform professional responsibilities

In the past, the BQDC competed in both American Parliamentary Debate and British Parliamentary Debate with the Director of Debate and BQDC student president jointly determining which debaters to send to tournaments with limited availability based on clear criteria such as interest, competitive success, and previous experience. This year, the new Director of Debate made important decisions arbitrarily without input from the team.

- Rejecting the use of external trials and choosing which students to send to Oxford and Worlds based on vague criteria. This includes selecting and rejecting certain students without ever watching some of them debate or being involved in the coaching process.

- Spending a disproportionate amount of the teams' budget by booking a 6 day trip to Oxford for a 2 day tournament and bringing her husband using BQDC funds who did not coach or judge. Tickets were booked for 6 days without student input and professors' concerns about missed classes were dismissed. Neither the director nor her husband were present at the tournament other than the opening announcements and the end of one round.
- Incorrectly telling students traveling to Worlds that they did not need to apply for Visas to enter Vietnam.
- Canceling the team's 50 year history of participating in American Parliamentary Debate (APDA) in the middle of the season without soliciting any student input, despite high participation.
- Significantly curtailing the teams participation in all student run tournaments (such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Oxford, and Worlds) and refocusing the team to competing in the YAATLY Online Debate League, a comparatively less competitive and less prestigious online division.
- Failing to fulfill her other coaching duties, including staying in her office for the majority of team practices or judging very few internal practice rounds for the entirety of the fall semester.
- Failing to fulfill her own guarantee to meet with the board and individual students about the upcoming semester despite promising to do so several times and refusing to respond to emails regarding such meetings.

### 3. Responses from administrative voices

Despite the best efforts of the team to (re-) establish a working relationship with the Director of Debate through the Rhetoric Department and members of the administration, no progress has been made. Instead, in a meeting held with the Rhetorics department and some members of the board, the team's concerns were repeatedly dismissed with comments such as "is your issue with Sammi or with the fact you have less power than last year?" and asking students to define the word "respect." Due to later conversations, we believe the contents of this meeting were disclosed to the Director of Debate despite its confidential nature.

We have exhausted each and every option afforded to us by the existing Brooks Quimby Debate Council structure to raise and address these objections. The former president and another member have already resigned. We see no possible alternative besides to follow them and also resign from the team with immediate effect. We call upon Bates to listen to its students, resolve this situation, and enforce its own equity and inclusion policies so BQDC can remain a home for future generations of debaters.

Signed,

Tosca Neumann (BQDC President)

Robert Cropp (BQDC Vice President and Treasurer)

Andrew Monteith (Resigned president of BQDC)

Tanvir Thamid (BQDC Novice Director)

Alan Pham (BQDC Tournament Director)

Aleisha Martinez Sandoval (BQDC Equity and Inclusion Coordinator)

Peregrine Beckett (2020-2022 Novice Director)

Adam Joseph Matos (BQDC Alumni & Public Relations Director)

Ari Hahn

Karan Kuppa-Apte

Lorenzo Songsare Shevy

Emma Listgarten

Avi Konduri

Diyor Kamolov

Manav Mittal

Ricky Huang

Amarachi Alozie

Samarth Jha

Foy Ma