

# Melbourne University Debating Society

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## Request:

- We'd like to request \$1000 from student council in order to help fund our operations for the rest of the year.
- We'd also like student council to consider a future and more permanent partnership between MUDS and UMSU, with a grant such as this included in future budgets.
- We'd appreciate in the future if the student council would ever consider providing MUDs with short-term loans if we ever have large outgoings that harm our short-term liquidity.

## Summary:

### **MUDS is fundamentally different to other societies:**

- We frequently send our members interstate and overseas for expensive university tournaments and frequently forward pay in excess of \$10,000 to do so.
- We run huge events, such as the Australian Debating Championships earlier this year, that host over 500 people to Melbourne University. Our weekly events sometimes have up to 100 members in attendance.
- Despite running a surplus, a profitable training program, and seeking corporate sponsorship, we simply do not have the money or means to sponsor individuals to attend tournaments. This is hampering our ability to send a diverse and large range of students, not just wealthy students. MUDS does not qualify for any grants or faculty funding.
- We have been approached by many schools to run non-profit or free training programs for disadvantaged schools and we currently do not have the capacity to do so.

### **Our club is challenged by a comparative lack of funding:**

- We want to send our best debaters to prestigious international tournaments, but more often teams are restricted to those who can afford to pay, rather than the most talented. We also want to make sure that we're sending students from a broad range of backgrounds, not just ones who come from private schools and have already had extensive coaching.
- We'd like to expand our schools coaching program to disadvantaged schools, which would promote the University's image in underserved areas, but can't afford to offer reduced rates.
- Club leaders are forced to take on huge financial burdens to cover the club's lack of liquidity, which is both unfair and unsustainable.

## **REVENUE**

We receive revenue from 3 main avenues. As we are not faculty affiliated, we receive no direct support from any faculty.

### **Sponsorship**

Last year we received close to \$5000 in corporate sponsorship. This year, however, we have received less than \$500. We are finding that firms are cutting back on sponsorship agreements due to the rise in social media.

### **Schools training**

Last year, we made a profit of \$2900. We partnered with 12 different schools in 2015. We offered a 10% discount to public schools, but have had several disadvantaged schools and community youth groups reach out to us for free, cost price or discounted services.

### **Problems**

1. In order to keep our training program affordable, most income is consumed by wages, and gross profits are small
2. We have heavy competition with the Debaters Association of Victoria and Monash University Debating and private coaching.

### **What we envision for our schools program:**

We would like to expand the reach of our schools program. In particular, we would like to expand our non-profit and discounted services.

We have been approached by several schools recently, such as Sunbury Downs, whose students have enjoyed DAV and MUDS sessions in the past but can no longer afford those services. There has also been an increase in debating programs in disadvantaged schools with the Teach For Australia program.

We would love to provide disadvantaged schools and youth community services training for free – we currently cannot afford to do this as a society, particularly when we often have to pay an additional travel allowance for jobs which are further away from the CBD.

### **Membership**

We receive a relatively small amount of money from membership. C&S grants are helpful to us but not appropriate for the main things we do (i.e. run tournament and send people to international tournaments). These expensive activities do not qualify for grants, and would exceed the amount of money available to us. Mainly, these grants help us to improve our club culture by providing a small subsidy for social events.

## **OUTGOINGS**

### **Tournaments**

There are four major debating tournaments a year that MUDS sends teams to (Australian Championships (Easters), Australasian Championships (Austral), Australasian Womens' Championships (Womens'), World Championships (Worlds)). Registration costs for tournaments are often due long before MUDS can select teams. This means that we as a society often must pay for team places and adjudicator places long before we are paid back. We have two major problems currently.

### 1. Liquidity

Last year, payments were due for Austral, Womens' and Worlds simultaneously. Our President was forced to personally contribute \$16,000 to cover these costs.

MUDS aims to run a small surplus each year (~\$1000), but in some years we have to cover unexpected costs, or schools training falls through, or we lose sponsorship. This reduces our capacity to build up liquidity.

#### Additionally, a lack of liquidity makes it difficult:

1. For us to refund and pay members on time;
2. For us to host minis and tournaments. For example, to run the Australian Intervarsity Debating Championships this year, many members of the organising committee have had to take on large costs (thousands of dollars) without being immediately reimbursed by the society. We also had to borrow money from the Monash Association of Debaters to pay hotel deposits. This was an incredibly generous offer and was paid back as soon as possible, but was a situation we would like to avoid in the future.

### 2. Sponsorship for members

This is one of our biggest problems. Tournaments are expensive to attend: this cost is rising. To help people attend, we offer sponsorship. This year, the world championships are in the Netherlands, and we currently have very little capacity to offer our members any sponsorship. Here is a summary of the sponsorship we offered last year.

Tournament	Location	Anticipated cost	Sponsorship offered	Total cost to society
Easters	Sydney	\$200 Flights \$350 Registration	\$80pp for each novice debater and adjudicator (20)	\$1600
Austral	Korea	\$1000+ Flights \$700 Registration	\$300pp for the top two ranked teams (6) \$300 for the top ranked adjudicator (1) \$200 for next three adjudicators (3)	\$2700

Womens'	Brisbane	\$300 Registration \$400 Flights	\$100 pp for each novice (6)	\$600
Worlds	Greece	\$700 Registration \$2000+ Flights*	\$8000 given to us by university. Society could not afford to offer additional sponsorship. This is not a permanent arrangement.	

**NOTE:** We used to get a grant from CCRAAG to sponsor world's participants that was discontinued in 2015.

Tournaments often don't include all meals, and travelling includes other significant expenses such as travel insurance.

### Problems

1. Our members just can't afford to attend tournaments. The top 2 teams at Australs and the winning team at Easter's did not attend Worlds, largely due to cost.
2. This lowers amount of people we can send – for the majority of tournaments, we are offered many more teams than we end up accepting.
3. We do not send a diverse range of people to tournaments: the people we send are wealthy, and often already talented as they rank in teams high enough to receive sponsorship.
4. We find that this disproportionately means we send less women and people of colour to tournaments.