



A Forum for Student Opinions

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'Night With the Experts' vital in crunch time

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Senior students participating in the 2009 We The People team met intellectual challenge and exercise in the Senior Lounge for the annual 'Night With The Experts' event recently on Thursday, December 11th.

This year local lawyers, politicians, former participants, and even some Trumbull administrators appeared to test the team's knowledge and help them prepare for the statewide competition, held on December 19th. The night proved to be not only helpful, but also eye-opening to the team-participants of a nationwide program in which students engage in a simulated congressional hearing.

"Though we had all of our general arguments in place, 'Night With The Experts' made the need for serious support and practice quite obvious," said Andrew Freeburg of Unit One.

The 24 students in the class adhered to each of their six 'unit' assignments. In the competition, each unit pertains to a specific question as identified by the Center for Civic Education. Divided into these six units, students went from table to table in the lounge. Here, they presented three prepared papers within the four-minute time constraint and supported their follow-up arguments.

Among the 'experts' are an eclectic panel of community members ranging from State Senator-Elect Anthony Musto to Trumbull High's own Dr. Tremaglio.



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Each judge brought to the table their own distinct style and guidance. Dr. Tremaglio, who has had much experience as a judge in these types of competitions referenced his own style the following day in the We The People 8th period class.

"I like to see how you reason with the facts... the most important thing you have to know is if you bring up a case, you've opened a door, and you better be prepared to walk through it."

Kevin Sutherland of Unit Four found a stronger, more direct approach useful. "Anthony Musto was intentionally tough on us. I think it was really beneficial because we didn't see that from any of the other judges."

For Freeburg and his unit

members, the variety in the responses proved to be the most valuable part of the night. "I feel like we got a full range of question sources from the judges, from administrators and politicians to lawyers and businessmen. Some of them threw us serious curveballs, and others gave us word-by-word critique for improvement. This was the best practice run I could have imagined!"

'Night With The Experts' is not the only advice the team



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has been getting. Along with the group's seasoned advisor, Mr. Margonis, many other faculty members have weighed in on the best way to go about the competition. Mr. Basbagill of the Social Studies department believes a wide range of

knowledge is the key, and offered that "Breadth is more important than depth."

Despite the heavy workload and hours of dedication, the students involved still manage to see some kind of respite in the process. "'We the People' is the most intellectually stimulating class I take, but at the same time, it's the most rewarding," said Jon Mark, member of the primarily focused judicial law group, Unit Five. Freeburg cites winning as one of his motivations saying, "The workload is intense and occasionally overwhelming, but there is a sublime satisfaction in arguing with a trial lawyer and winning, having had only four months in class to prepare."

Above: Seniors Nicole Cutler and Ken Csehak focus intently on their judge's inquiry in the follow-up portion of their session. Left: (From left) Andrew Freeburg, Jackie Testani, Elise Granata, and Lauren Hickey of Unit One prepare to discuss political philosophy's part in the structure of the Constitution.