

Speak Mission Statement

Promoting Debate, Public Speaking, Education, and Advocacy

(Effective upon Student Bar Association approval, Oct. 7th, 2014)

As an organization at Vermont Law School (VLS), Speak will uphold the values and objectives of the Student Bar Association through its mission to promote debate, public speaking, education, and advocacy. Speak aims to create educational programs and trainings that will support members of the VLS community as well as local and regional partners and increase participants' confidence in oratory, critical thinking, and diplomatic dissent.

According to the Student Bar Association (SBA) Bylaws under Article 2. General Provisions, § 2.2. Objectives, the purpose of the SBA is:

- To support and encourage academic excellence and professional growth among students;
- Ensure the attainment and preservation of the rights of the individual student to acquire a quality legal education in a just and reasonable manner;
- And serve as the vehicle for interaction and communication between the students and the faculty, administration, alumni, and the community.

Speak's mission aligns with SBA's objectives to increase students' academic and professional proficiency, to address the educational needs of each student as an individual, and to strengthen partnerships between VLS community members and regional programs for increased interaction and public service.

Speak's primary focus is to provide debate and public speaking instruction for individuals at VLS and throughout the region seeking to improve their oratory and analytical skills. For many students attending VLS, the fear of public speaking due to inexperience and/or lack of training poses an obstacle to achieving academic and personal goals. This manifests itself in the classroom, where students may be afraid to verbalize their opinions, and in professional setting, in which students are intimidated to address large groups or attend group interviews. The insecurities experienced by students at Vermont Law School are shared by many other students and individuals throughout the region. In order to achieve academic excellence and professional growth for students at VLS and others in our community, Speak proposes to offer debate and self-presentation trainings and programs to help these individuals improve their public speaking abilities. These skills will help individuals to attain the academic and professional success outlined in the SBA objectives.

Each student in the VLS community has a unique set of experiences, passions, and abilities. The SBA ensures that VLS provides each student with access to an educational experience that will compliment that particular student's requirement of a legal education. Speak offers an opportunity for students at VLS who have extensive public speaking and/or debate experience to collaborate with those who are seeking to improve these skills in order to form mutually beneficial partnerships. This type of partnership allows students to build strong relationships with one another while pursuing academic and professional success. Additionally, Speak allows all of its members to share their public speaking and debate strategies with local and regional community members. This allows VLS students to partner with various community members and organizations in order to contribute to public education and advocacy initiatives around

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the state. Students at VLS are interested in honing their skills, supplementing their classroom performance with challenging applications of their learning, and contributing to social change. Speak supports the SBA's objectives and allows students to pursue these individual interests through promoting debate, public speaking, and public service.

As an organization focused on improving debate and public speaking skills, Speak is inherently focused on improving interpersonal communication within the VLS community. Debate instruction prioritizes critical analysis, diplomatic communication, and public presentation. These elements are essential to individual, collaborative, or public communications. As students become more adept and confident in their abilities to analyze and issue and present thoughtful, persuasive argumentation in favor of their opinions, they will also improve the quality of discourse in their community. Whether exhibited in a private disagreement between colleagues or a public debate between panelists, skills such as clear presentation and confident oratory will help VLS students and community members communicate effectively and considerately. Through these processes, speak can support the SBA in its mission to serve as the vehicle for interaction and communication between the students and the faculty, administration, alumni, and the community.

Speak is founded on the principle that individuals should have access to educational opportunities to strengthen their personal and professional growth. Speak seeks to promote this growth through offerings debate and public speaking training to increase educational opportunities and enable individuals to confidently advocate for themselves and their passions. Speak's goals align with the SBA's objectives to create a strong academic and professional environment for VLS students and community members. Through these aligned objectives, Speak and the SBA can partner to strengthen education and social change at Vermont Law School.