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Allie Jeppson

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# Ethics Bowl Competition Tests Students As They Wrestle With Troubling Issues

By Allie Jeppson



It's not often that most people have the opportunity to argue with each other in front of a crowd of people and a panel of judges, but on Feb. 21, students from across the USU campus did just that.

They were discussing different ethical situations in the Fourth Annual Ethics Bowl. Hosted by the Society for the Advancement of Ethical Leadership, (SAEL), the event was set up as a single-elimination debate tournament. With 24 competing teams, each team of three students was paired against another team, given an ethical case study, and assigned a position to take. The teams then had five minutes to prepare their case before arguing in front of judges that the option they had been given represented the most ethical of the proposed solutions.

Topics debated during the event dealt with issues such as the DREAM Act, social media, weight regulation, and movie piracy.

"The goal for this event was to help support the Huntsman School's fourth pillar of ethical leadership," said SAEL Faculty Advisor John Ferguson. "Our students need to think through difficult ethical problems and this is a one way for them to wrestle with some complex issues now so they'll be better prepared when faced with such dilemmas in the workplace."

He said that when some people talk about ethics, they are thinking of all issues having a right or wrong choice. Sometimes, however, the choice is not so black and white.

"What if there are pros and cons on both sides?" he asked. "What if you have two bad choices or two good choices or what if it's not clear which approach is best?"

Anthropology and political science student Prairie Fox said she came to understand the complexity of ethics while debating a dilemma that asked whether or not using information from Wikipedia required citations.

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She said that she had always assumed citing Wikipedia wasn't necessary but after the debate and looking at both sides of the issue, she decided crediting the website for ideas and facts might be a good idea after all.

"The major thing about (the Ethics Bowl) is that it forces you to look at both sides," she said. "It challenges how you think." Business major Jeff Parker agreed.

"It definitely stretched us because we were assigned which opinion we had to take regardless of our personal views," he said.

"It is important for students to start struggling with such issues now because if they don't, they won't be prepared," Mr. Ferguson said. "They won't have thought through some of the ethical issues they might face in the real world."