



Director of Development Opportunity Guide

www.chicagodebates.org



To advance the educational achievement, community contributions, and life success of Chicago's youth through the transformative power of academic debate.



About Chicago Debates

Chicago Debates envisions a world in which Chicago youth are empowered to find their voice, succeed in college and career, and become leaders in their community. The organization was formed in 1995 by a group of business and civic leaders who were passionate about finding a way to bring the benefits of debate into Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Since its inception, Chicago Debates' CPS partnership has grown from an initial five high schools on the south side to over 90 middle and high schools throughout the city. Chicago Debates has become one of the most competitive policy urban debate leagues in the country, and a national model for other urban leagues.

Chicago Debates students compete in five to six tournaments a year around a nationally selected topic. Tournament participation requires students to conduct research, use evidence, think critically, and synthesize complex ideas to make their arguments. During a normal school year, debate tournaments are held in person, although currently they are being conducted virtually due to the pandemic.

As the largest of the 22 urban policy debate leagues in the country, Chicago Debates engaged nearly 1800 CPS students in the 2018-2019 school year, which decreased to about 1200 in 2019-2020 due to the CPS strike and COVID-19. Students who participate in debate are 300% more likely than their peers to graduate high school and 80% more likely to graduate college. The organization's current strategic plan calls for significant increase in student and school participation in its programs by 2027.

The dramatic growth of Chicago Debates has been due in large part to the generous financial support of individuals, the private sector, and funding organizations as well as revenue from Chicago Debates' two annual signature events. In FY 2020, philanthropy accounted for approximately 61% of the organization's \$1.2 million budget. Currently the largest philanthropic revenue sources are events and foundation giving. Chicago Debates believes there is tremendous potential in the growing of corporate and particularly individual giving and is seeking a Development leader to visualize and implement a comprehensive development plan for maximum revenue growth in these areas. The organization's current strategic plan calls for philanthropy to increase to an annual \$2.76 million by 2025.



The Opportunity: Director of Development

Chicago Debates' first Director of Development (DOD) will be responsible for designing and executing a comprehensive annual fundraising plan that ensures Chicago Debates has the resources necessary to fulfill its mission and meet its strategic priorities. The Director of Development will provide strategic leadership to diversify, strengthen, and increase philanthropic contributions with a focus on individual, corporate, and foundation giving.

Reporting to Executive Director [Dr. Toinette Gunn](#), The Director of Development will be an enthusiastic, relationship-focused team member who will work with Board and staff leadership to encourage donor engagement resulting in maximum philanthropic investment in the organization's mission and programs.



Performance Objectives

Strategic Leadership

- ◆ Serve as the primary face of all things relative to philanthropy within Chicago Debates.
- ◆ Demonstrate initiative and leadership in broad issues facing the nonprofit sector and the profession.
- ◆ Support the Board of Directors and the Executive Director in their efforts to strengthen donor relationships; exemplify and model the highest level of strategic donor interaction.
- ◆ Prepare the Executive Director and Board members for gift solicitations, accompany on calls as needed, and provide appropriate follow-up.
- ◆ Serve as the staff liaison and lead the Board's Development Committee.
- ◆ Manage the engagement of the Associate Board, including staffing quarterly committee meetings, managing events, and directing recruitment of new Associate Board members.

Donor Relations & Portfolio Management

- ◆ Develop and manage a portfolio of donors who give or have the capacity to invest at \$5,000 or higher.
- ◆ Prospect for donors and direct prospect research utilizing the CRM (Neon) database, recommendations from stakeholders, and other means to identify and qualify donors.
- ◆ Work, as appropriate, with leadership volunteers to identify and secure visits with those in their peer networks, with past leaders of the organization, alumni, and other stakeholders.
- ◆ While primarily focusing on unrestricted gifts, work in close collaboration with leadership and program staff to present needs that correspond to where donors and prospects identify, while always being responsive to each donor's interests and attentive to fiduciary responsibilities (i.e., donor intent with gifts).
- ◆ Oversee the CRM (Neon) process, including ensuring the validity of all data in the fundraising database and tracking systems.
- ◆ Lead by example and ensure excellent customer service is provided to donors through accessibility to program staff and leadership (as granted), timely responsiveness, quality in all interactions and personalized communications.
- ◆ Work diligently to meet agreed upon monthly and annual activity and revenue-producing goals, and be purposeful about every visit, communication, and the desired outcome for each "touch."

Performance Objectives

Administration & Management

- ◆ Create and implement an annual and long-term comprehensive development plan and calendar with corresponding deadlines, deliverables, budgets, and goals (utilizing Basecamp software).
- ◆ Ensure that the development pipeline is continually being filled and strengthened in areas including individual, corporate, and foundation giving.
- ◆ Motivate, develop, and supervise a Development Associate and any potential future team members to deliver on specific components of the Development pipeline.
- ◆ Oversee the development of solicitation materials related to fundraising in collaboration with the Communications and Engagement Manager and the Development Associate.
- ◆ Lead Chicago Debates' signature fundraising events through the lens of further engaging donors in Chicago Debates' mission.
- ◆ Oversee and ensure integrity of regular reporting on goal achievement to demonstrate progress, identify areas of concern, and revise strategies as needed.
- ◆ Monitor budget and revenue targets and ensure that the department performs within revenue and expense guidelines and expectations.
- ◆ Track industry trends, strategy, and best practices, including educating others and evaluating opportunities for continuous improvement. Act as a resource for current practice and strategy.
- ◆ Utilize data and evaluative measures to assess donor satisfaction, identify improvements, and implement modifications.

External, Community, & Partner Relations

- ◆ Maintain a strong presence in professional organizations, community groups, and other spaces relevant to the work of Chicago Debates and its mission.
- ◆ Provide a best practice approach to Chicago Debates' efforts to effectively communicate the mission, goals, and accomplishments to donors, prospective donors, and the broader community.
- ◆ Create and implement a plan to identify and build strong relationships with key donors, community leaders, and volunteers, and engage organizations and companies with which Chicago Debates should partner.





The Qualified Candidate

Specific Requirements Include:

- ◆ Demonstrated passion for Chicago Debates' mission and vision.
- ◆ A minimum of 5 years of nonprofit fundraising experience.
- ◆ A minimum of 3 years of progressive experience in leadership and management, with ability to lead small teams.
- ◆ Creative, self-starter attitude, with the desire to get out of the office and build external relationships.
- ◆ Deep understanding of Development strategies and best practices.
- ◆ Demonstrated record of securing five and six figure gifts.
- ◆ Proficiency with core social media platforms (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, IG, etc.) and ability to utilize them as a tool in identifying and engaging donors.
- ◆ Ability to engage with diverse audiences, including donors, board members, students, coaches, volunteers, staff, executives, etc.
- ◆ Strong written, verbal, and interpersonal communication skills.
- ◆ Career track record that shows stability with an organization and capacity to develop and nurture relationships culminating in overall success.
- ◆ Bachelor's degree.



How To Apply

Compensation will be determined based on experience and skills within the range of **\$90,000 – \$110,000**. Full-time employees are eligible for health, dental, and vision insurance, PTO, professional development allowance, sick days, and holidays, including a holiday shut-down from Christmas Eve to New Year's day.

Chicago Debates is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, disability, marital status, veteran status, or any other occupationally irrelevant criteria.

APPLY NOW

To assure confidential tracking of all applicants, no applications will be accepted via email. ALL INQUIRIES WILL BE HELD IN STRICT CONFIDENCE.

This search is being managed by Laura Weinman, Vice President of KEES. Questions may be addressed to lweinman@kees2success.com.



About KEES

KEES (formerly Alford Executive Search) is a nonprofit executive search firm that builds transformative teams and leaders. A woman owned and operated firm, KEES offers a full array of nonprofit consulting services including executive search, leadership development, interim staffing, and HR support. For more information, please visit www.kees2success.com.





More About the Power of Debate

Debate gives students the skills they need to succeed.

Debaters read and synthesize sophisticated materials on complex public policy issues. In a debate tournament, students must link evidence from research to every one of their arguments. These skills—high-level reading, critical thinking, and evidence-based argumentation—are closely aligned with the Common Core State Standards and are recognized as critical to students' college and career success.

Debate improves students' academic performance and graduation rates.

Independent peer-reviewed and published studies demonstrate that participation in competitive debate leads to higher GPAs, higher graduation rates, and better college-readiness (based on ACT scores).

Debate is an engaging, student-centered activity.

Rather than imparting knowledge through lectures, coaches engage students in learning games and debate exercises. Coaches direct students in research activities, while students collaborate to build their knowledge of debate subtopics. This high-level engagement motivates

students in Chicago Debates to spend an average of 145 out-of-class hours on debate during the school year. Chicago Debates' highly engaged high school students spend an average of 400 hours per year on debate. This time commitment, along with the academic rigor of debate training, is uniquely effective in improving student outcomes.

Debate promotes college success.

The research proves that debate is a powerful strategy to prepare Chicago students for college. Alumni share that debate introduced them to the possibility of college success, inspired them to go to college, and helped them get the scholarships they needed to access college.

Debate enhances students civic understanding and engagement.

Debate engages students in a deliberative, structured process of learning, critical thinking, and dialogue on important and complex public policy issues. Chicago Debates students share that debate empowers them to voice their ideas and inspires them to learn more about the world. As Secretary of Education Arne Duncan stated, "Competitive debate is nurturing a new generation of engaged, committed citizens."