

Strong regional showing propels OU ethics bowl team to nationals

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Following a stellar performance in regional competition, Oakland University's Ethics Bowl team has earned a coveted spot in the National Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl competition, which takes place in February.



Front row from left: Quinn Bessette, Marissa Cimini, Kaira Mercer, Rima Stepanian, Hadrian Matti, Lisa Campbell (coach), Eilish Warner. Back row: Mark Rigstad (coach), Adam Conigliaro, Elan Pszenica, Ciara Sosnowski, Natalie Cordell, Vikram Rao

Two Oakland teams competed in the Great Lakes Regional Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl on Saturday, November 16 on OU's campus. Both went undefeated, topping a talented field that included schools from Michigan and northern Ohio. Oakland was one of two schools to secure a spot in national competition, joining Grand Valley State. Each will send one team to nationals.

Other schools who competed were Adrian College, University of Detroit Mercy, Western Michigan University, Mott Community College, Saginaw Valley State University, Bowling Green State University and Heidelberg University. This is the sixth time OU's Ethics Bowl team has earned a trip to national competition, according to Lisa Campbell, special lecturer and team coach.

"We're exceptionally proud of both our teams going undefeated this year," she said. "Our mix of veterans and new members came together and worked hard all semester. We're looking forward to success at nationals."

In ethics bowl competitions, teams debate a range of social, ethical and political issues. Their performances are evaluated by a judging panel that awards points based on presentation quality and responses to critiques and counterarguments. They also respond to questions from the judges.

"The questions are to see whether a team's views can hold up to criticism, as well as remain consistent when considering difficult implications that their arguments may lead to," said Quinn Bessette, president of OU's Ethics Bowl team. "Teams are rated in a variety of categories, including how well they describe the central moral issues involved in a case, how well they rebut the other team's presentation and how well they respond to rebuttals."

Rima Stepanian, treasurer of OU's Ethics Bowl team, added that new cases are released each year focusing on moral and ethical controversies of the day.

"This year, we discussed a slew of different cases, including climate change, vaccination and disease epidemics, student loan forgiveness, social media, physician-assisted suicide, trademark law and abortion," she said.

Team members prepared for the competition by taking the Philosophy 3910 Ethics Bowl course, a biweekly class that meets on Mondays and Wednesdays, as well as in meetings outside of class at Kresge Library. The group consists of students from a variety of majors. Stepanian is majoring in biomedical sciences, with minors in philosophy and sociology, and Bessette is a double major in English and Philosophy.

"Ethics Bowl competitions are intellectually challenging and require students to draw upon many areas of knowledge," said Mark Rigstad, team coach, associate professor and chair of the Philosophy Department. "To have a team of dedicated students from a wide range of academic disciplines is a tremendous benefit."

Tryouts for OU Ethics Bowl are held in March and open to students of all majors. For additional information, contact Lisa Campbell at llcampbe@oakland.edu.

Campbell organized the regional conference at OU, and the event was sponsored by the [OU Center for Ethics](#). Additionally, Oakland University's Ethics Bowl team is supported by the College of Arts and Sciences. It is also a student organization, supported by the [Office for Student Involvement](#).