

To: Dr. Erika Paterson  
From: Jennifer Luu **JL**  
Date: February 24, 2017  
Subject: *Proposal for Identifying Causes of Low Female Retention Rate in the UBC Debate Society*

## **Introduction**

The UBC Debate Society is a competitive club centred on debating and persuasive speaking. Its major goals are to bring competitive recognition to UBC and promote debate in the Vancouver community. While the club promotes a socially inclusive environment, it struggles to attract and maintain female members. This problem manifests in a consistently larger male to female ratio in regular training sessions and club events. Without identifying the causes behind low female retention rate, this phenomenon may continue into the future.

## **Statement of Problem**

Low female retention rate in the UBC Debate Society reflects low club diversity. Because of low female retention rate, current members feel unwelcome in the club. This is a deterrent for female members' training and leadership participation. Retention rates of female members are low relative to their male counterparts. The club's commitment to inclusivity and its longevity are significantly harmed by this problem. Low female presence also creates a perception that the club is exclusively male-dominated.

## **Proposed Solution**

In the interest of club commitment to inclusivity and longevity, I propose to identify causes of low female member retention. Knowledge of the causes will be beneficial in planning actions to retain female members. I will additionally identify methods to retain female members, to improve club initiatives towards inclusivity.

## **Scope**

I will pursue the following areas of inquiry in the formal report:

1. What are current attitudes of female members towards debate, relative to their male counterparts?
2. What are systemic attitudes about female participation in intercollegiate debate?

3. What are contributors to low female retention rate in the UBC Debate Society?
4. How can the UBC Debate Society increase female member retention?

### **Methods**

My primary data sources will include consultations with a current Equity Officer, Hannah Goddard-Rebstein; a Diversity Committee member, Zeynep Fattah; and Executive Member Garion Hicks. I will collect consultation data in the form of anonymous responses to interview questions. I will also conduct an online, anonymous survey to assess male and female member attitudes towards debate. Finally, I will gather secondary source data from online sources. My sources will include academic publications and intercollegiate debate-related websites.

I will summarize data from my primary sources by presenting relevant verbatim quotes and visuals. Data from secondary sources will be summarized in quotes.

### **My Qualifications**

As a 2 year member of the UBC Debate Society, I am familiar with club operations and structure. I additionally worked as a Residence Advisor for UBC Student Housing and Hospitality Services, providing me with experience in developing community initiatives.

### **Conclusion**

A more diverse representation in the UBC Debate Society is needed to maintain the club's mandate towards inclusivity. In addressing the above areas of inquiry, I can identify causes of low female retention rate in the club and solutions. With your approval, I will start my research immediately.