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Sunday, February 9, 2003

Valley Views: Debate showcases new technology, solid content

By Maxwell Schnurer

When it comes to debate, we have a method of inquiry that stimulates minds and teaches strong research skills. Debate results in vigorous argument and critical analysis of ideas. The biggest barrier to debate is distance.

Almost every weekend I gather my debaters to drive hundreds of miles in order to get a tightly compressed schedule of debates in against colleagues at other colleges.

On Jan. 29, all this changed. Marist and the University of Vermont had the first debate over Internet2. This connection allowed debaters to argue from the comfort of their own colleges with their messages transmitted at television quality. The technology of the Internet has allowed debates to occur beyond the constraints of space. Debaters have the skills and the content. The intense debate that emerged in this medium about the International Criminal Court highlights the skills that emerge from debating.

Even more importantly, the use of the Internet for debate opens up the possibility for debaters to engage each other across national lines. There are excited debaters across the globe that would like the chance to debate against each other. Debaters in Russia and South Korea among other places watched this debate, and I believe that one day soon these debaters will be able to turn on the screen and begin competing.

Imagine Marist debaters arguing against students in Serbia or Chile while the event is available for all to see online for virtually no cost. The world of ideas could finally surpass the distance and difference that keep us apart.

This debate made history, but more importantly, it opened up the doors for more discussion and dialogue in the world.

Dr. Maxwell Schnurer is a professor of communication and the debate coach at Marist College.



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