Welcome Email

Hello parents and camper and welcome to the 2020 Mean Green Comet!

This page will provide you with information about:

• the technological platforms that students will be using at camp
• the technological requirements students will need
• how to access the technological platforms
• Technical support
• First Sessions / Day 1
• Schedules
• Technological Platforms

The MGC will be using two technological platforms for daily learning and interaction. Our staff has been trained on each platform and has been using the platforms since April. Each platform provides students and staff the ability to interact for lectures, debates, performances and coaching sessions.

Blackboard – Each student will have access to UTD’s outstanding online learning resource, Blackboard. Blackboard is one of the premier eLearning tools in the world. This platform provides instructors with the ability to have the whole class together, break the class into working groups, share files, share screens or even share a white board to allow for mobile collaboration. The online classroom can also be recorded to be shared or reviewed later by the students. Blackboard will not only allow students complete video access to their instructors but will also allow cross-collaboration between divisions giving students access to more of the expertise of our award-winning staff.

Microsoft Teams – Part of our new digital reality is learning to leverage video conferencing tools for competition. Using Microsoft Teams, students will participate in numerous LIVE practice debates, performances and speeches. Students can also record their speeches and send them to staff members for suggestions and critique. Each division will use a mixture of live and recorded practice speeches and performances. Students will be given instruction by their lab leaders on how to access Microsoft Teams. Teams access will be handled by division leaders and they will provide instruction on how and when they will utilize teams in lab.

Technological Requirements

Students attending online sessions at the Mean Green Comet are required to have a computer, camera (external or on their computer), microphone (external or on their computer), and access to reliable internet.

Our staff has been hard at work testing different options and simulating the daily activities that students will have at the MGC. These test and simulations have led us to the following recommendations for internet connections, microphones, speakers and computer setups. Here are their recommendations:

Internet Connection – A wireless connection is possible, but an Ethernet connection provides a much more stable setup. Many newer laptops do not have Ethernet ports, buy you can order an adapter online for a very reasonable price. If a student does not have hardwired connection into a router, the closer the student can move to the router the better. In conclusion, Ethernet connection are preferred but not necessary.
Microphones – A student will need a computer that has a microphone. While most computers have built-in microphones, some will require external microphones. Please check to make sure the computer the student will be using has a microphone. During our test and simulations, we noticed that use of a headset is more ideal. While gamer headsets are the most ideal (range in price from $30-$45) there are plenty of other options you can find for $25 online. AirPods and other earbuds that are designed for phone calls are mediocre. They will get the job done if needed but the clarity and volume is not the best. If you have to use them, we suggest using the microphone on your laptop. Here are two options our staff have used and can be found on Amazon:

- Gamer - Jeecoo Stereo Gaming Headset
- Non-gamer – Logitech USB Headset H390 with Noise Cancelling Mic

How to Access Blackboard

To access Blackboard, the main teaching platform used by the MGC, go to https://www.utdallas.edu and on the top green bar click ELEARNING. You will then be asked to enter your NETID and password. When you do you will be taken to your eLearning homepage where you will see your divisional pages under the header MY ORGANIZATIONS.

In addition to the divisions you have enrolled in, you should also see a course called MGC Welcome and Rules. The Welcome and Rules course is where you will meet for your orientation to rules and ant planned all-camp meetings. This is where you should log in on the first day per the schedule listed below under the section First Day / Day 1.

We have prepared a short tutorial on logging in and using Blackboard that you can access here - https://debatecamp.utdallas.edu/blackboard-intro. This tutorial will answer your basic sign in and usage questions, but if you have issues, or need additional assistance please let me know and we will be happy to assist you.

Students will have access to Blackboard beginning Wednesday, June 24, 5PM. If you have not yet received your NET ID setup information, please contact me directly to receive instructions. *Note if you enrolled in after June 19, your net ID will NOT be processed until this Friday, the 26th of June.

We encourage you to login sometimes after 5PM Wednesday and before your camp session begins to make sure you see your correct divisions and the MGC Welcome and Rules courses. If you don’t, please let us know ASAP and we’ll help you get it sorted out.

Technical Support

It’s important to us that your camp time is spent learning and interacting with our award-winning faculty, and not spent trouble-shooting technical issues. Colin Quinn, the Camp Office Director, will be available from 9am-6pm daily to answer questions or concerns from students or parents. Students will also be able to ask their lab leaders for help about the different platforms.

Starting June 28th, Colin can be reached at (847) 744-0353

First Sessions / Day 1

The Mean Green Comet Debate Institute has 8 different divisions and the start dates vary. Please see the schedule below for the time and date when your division will have its first online session. The first online session will be hosted on the MGC Welcome Blackboard page. This session will provide students with information about their division, answer any general questions students have about the camp and provide
them with MGC rules. After this session students will be informed when their first lab session will meet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy Debate - Scholars</td>
<td>June 28th</td>
<td>9:00am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln-Douglas</td>
<td>June 28th</td>
<td>9:00am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Forum</td>
<td>June 28th</td>
<td>9:00am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressional Debate</td>
<td>June 28th</td>
<td>9:00am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School – Lincoln-Douglas</td>
<td>July 8th</td>
<td>9:00am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School – Public Forum</td>
<td>July 8th</td>
<td>9:00am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School – Intro</td>
<td>July 8th</td>
<td>9:00am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Interpretation</td>
<td>July 8th</td>
<td>11:00am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extemporaneous Speaking</td>
<td>July 8th</td>
<td>11:00am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worlds School Debate</td>
<td>July 12th</td>
<td>9:00am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Schedules**

All of the divisions operate on different schedules. You can find division schedules in two places: 1) on the Blackboard page assigned to that division and 2) on the MGC webpage for that division. All division schedules will be posted online 1 week prior to the start of the division. If you cannot find the schedule for your division please contact Louis Petit (louiepetit@gmail.com).