• Urban Debate Leagues (UDLs) currently exist in 24 of the nation's largest cities.

• Currently over 500 urban high schools are part of the Urban Debate Network. More than 40,000 urban public school students have competed in UDLs.

• Policy debate is the most academically rigorous of all interscholastic speech activities and the oldest, dating back to 1928, of all high school academic competitions. Policy debate develops core academic skills: literacy, critical thinking, research, communication, organization, and supporting of arguments.

• UDLs can have a fundamental impact on participating schools. An Argumentation and Debate course is offered at almost half of the schools in the Urban Debate Network. Curricular Debate, a method that incorporates formal debating throughout the regular curriculum, is offered in several districts.

• UDLs promote education equity. Not only are they providing rigorous academic training to students from all across participating cities, some of those urban public school students are competing nationally and winning. UDLs have placed highly at state debate championships in California, Georgia, Illinois, New Jersey, and New York. UDL teams have been in the top 16 National Finalists on four separate occasions, placing 5th in the nation in 2003.

• Debate improves graduation rates: Among students who are most at risk of dropping out, 72% of urban debaters graduate, as compared to 43% of non-debaters. Fully 85% of urban debaters attend college, and they are 89% more likely than non-debaters to attend a four-year college and 80% more likely to graduate.

• Urban debate is highly efficient and cost-effective as an out-of-school-time program. A full academic season costs under $750 per student served, compared with an industry average of nearly $1,500.

• The commitment by urban public school districts to urban debate is substantial and growing. Since 1997, approximately $11 million has been invested in Urban Debate Leagues by school districts such as those in Baltimore, Detroit, St. Louis, Seattle, Newark, Kansas City, and Chicago. Private partners have also made significant, multi-million dollar investments in UDLs. The Urban Debate Network was formed in 1997 by the Open Society Institute (OSI), part of the Soros Foundations Network. National leadership of the Urban Debate Network was assumed by the NAUDL in 2002.