



Volunteer Spotlight:

Anitra Howard

Virginia Wesleyan University, Class of 2020

VFIC Ethics Bowl Competitor & Champion

WVU Welcome Center Coordinator

Anitra Howard is no stranger to the VFIC Ethics Bowl. She, along with her teammates from Virginia Wesleyan University, earned the Batten Trophy in 2020. After graduation, Anitra embarked on her career at the very same institution she graduated from and currently serves as WVU's Welcome Center Coordinator. Anitra began serving as an Ethics Bowl volunteer in 2022 as a judge and most recently served as a moderator at the 2023 Ethics Bowl. Here's what she had to say about her experience.



What led you to join the Ethics Bowl Team as an undergraduate at Virginia Wesleyan University?

I came into the ethics bowl as a freshman after one of my friends recommended me for it. I was already on the executive board of our school's debate club, as was this friend, and he saw real potential in me and thought that I would be a great fit! I was kind of a last minute recruit as one of the other competitors was no longer able to participate in the competition. Since I came in so late, I didn't have as much practice and experience as my other teammates, but I fell in love with it all the same. My freshman year, our team consisted of Alex Powers, Brianna Sandy, Brandon Foster, and myself, and we went on to the final round and were runner ups. The next year, Alex Powers, Criofan Shaw and myself won the Ethics Bowl. Even though these are both massive achievements that I am so proud of (Go Marlins!!), what really made me fall in love with the Ethics Bowl were all the things that go on behind the scenes. I loved fighting tooth and nail for our stances - both in practice and in competition-, the fun car trips on our way to the Bowl, and getting to meet and talk with peers from other schools. Ethics Bowl is a wonderful opportunity to expand yourself and your views, a place whereby the nature of the competition, you are pushed to look at what is and isn't ethical, and I think that's so important in today's climate.

What was it like to serve as a judge and moderator for the VFIC's Ethics Bowl after having been a student competitor and champion with Virginia Wesleyan University?

Because I graduated from Virginia Wesleyan a semester early, I was unable to compete in my senior year but I still wanted to be involved because the ethics bowl had made such an impact on me. Our coach Dr. Kathy Merlock Jackson suggested that I look at volunteering with the event as a moderator or a judge. To be completely honest, I felt extremely underqualified to serve as either, but I tossed my hat into the ring and was chosen to be a judge for the 2022 Ethics Bowl and it is one of the coolest things I've ever done. It was so interesting to see what it's like to be on the other side of the room. As the case was being read I found myself falling back into my habits of annotating the case and parsing out the main issues, stakeholders, and principles that could be used to make the case. Judging the competitors for me was such a fun experience because I was able to give them feedback as someone who had been where they were before. Coming up with a stance and creating an argument for it in 6 minutes is challenging! Not to mention dissecting your opponents arguments while defending yours and sticking to the details of the case. Being able to help the students hone in what to focus on or how to clean up their arguments was so valuable because it was what I as a competitor wanted to hear from my judges and I was given the opportunity to share that with the current students.

This past year, the Ethics Bowl was held at Virginia Wesleyan University and I was asked to serve as a moderator. This was also such a cool experience because I got to watch both the judges and competitors while still being a part of the rounds. I did find it challenging not to give feedback -and there are notes to prove it- but overall it was so fun to see the rounds from a different perspective.



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What advice would you give to future students participating in the VFIC Ethics Bowl?

I feel like all my advice would be really technical, like to remember your ethical principles and stick to your main argument throughout the round. Pay attention to your competitors' arguments and don't be afraid to poke holes in them during your question! In addition I think it's really important to play to each of your teammate's strengths and weaknesses. If someone is really good at being concise, take that into consideration when planning out your statements. If someone maybe is better at analyzing the case, let them help you keep the facts straight during your argument. When a team is a well oiled machine, they are more likely to succeed! Outside of competition I would recommend really talking to the other competitors, moderators, and judges. The Ethics Bowl is a great opportunity to meet new people and network!

Tell us about your position as the Welcome Center Coordinator at VWU and your work in Enrollment Services.

As the Welcome Center Coordinator at VWU, I get to continue my work with the Wesleyan Ambassador program that I started working with as a freshman in a Director role! I help our student ambassadors prepare to give tours and work as a manager for them as well. In addition to my work with the ambassadors I help out around the office with administrative duties and interact with all of our students who come for tour.

What value do you feel you gained from being on the Ethics Bowl team in your current position at VWU?

The Ethics Bowl definitely helped me with my public speaking which is very valuable in the position that I'm in. That being said, I feel like the more intellectual skills that I gained from the Ethics Bowl really help me with my role at Eleanor's Norfolk, an intersectional feminist bookstore that I work at. Arguing the cases in the Ethics Bowl has helped me in my local literary activism not only through public speaking, but through being able to apply practical ethics to our events, programs, and discussions that we host. Ethics Bowl also got me interested in a variety of different topics that I would not have even considered previously, making me a more well read and well rounded person. I would encourage everyone to try and get involved in the Ethics Bowl in some capacity. If it's too late for you to compete, volunteer as a moderator or judge! Even just sitting in the rounds will be a great experience! Good luck to all the competitors for next year, and I look forward to seeing everyone there!



2024 VFIC Ethics Bowl
Hollins University, Roanoke, Virginia
January 28-29

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