NHSEBBridge: Promoting Student Access and Equity in the National High School Ethics Bowl

Abstract
NHSEBBridge is a new, pilot-stage initiative at the Parr Center for Ethics, designed for schools new to the National High School Ethics Bowl (NHSEB). NHSEBBridge specifically targets underserved communities and under-resourced schools who may not otherwise have access to the NHSEB’s academic, social, and civic benefits. The program is tightly integrated with a service-learning course in the Philosophy Department at UNC-CH. In addition to teaching the fundamentals of ethics pedagogy and the essentials of deliberative democracy, the course partners UNC undergraduates directly with schools participating in the NHSEBBridge program in order to design pedagogy resources and coach participants (both students and teachers) on ethical reasoning, moral theories, argument construction, and bowl mechanics, in a series of virtually conducted 1:1 site visits. NHSEBBridge culminates in a brand new, online-only Ethics Bowl event for participating schools, carefully designed to welcome them to NHSEB.

Basic Information
Project Coordinator(s)
Alex Richardson, Michael Vazquez

Steering Committee
- Sarah Stroud, Professor/Director, UNC Chapel Hill, Department of Philosophy/Parr Center for Ethics
- Sally Moore, Director of Undergraduate Programming, UNC Chapel Hill, Department of Philosophy/Parr Center for Ethics

Funding Amount Requested
$10,000

Expected Project Completion Date
September 2023

Project Description
While the National High School Ethics Bowl (NHSEB) has seen prodigious growth since its founding in 2012, we recognize that this growth has not always been evenly distributed across demographics or geographic areas. Like other academically-focused activities for high school students in the U.S., the NHSEB is significantly easier to access for students from particular kinds of schools. Students from private and well-resourced public high schools, for example, are overrepresented in the National High School Ethics Bowl compared to their representation in the general population (based on data collected by the Parr Center for Ethics in 2020). This is true in at least two senses: (a) students from those schools are more likely to benefit from co- and extracurricular programs at their schools, both established and experimental,
and (b) students from those schools often end up performing well in Ethics Bowl events. Well-resourced schools have outsized capacities for clubs and activities, and devote particular attention to those with demonstrable academic benefits for their students. This is often in stark contrast to lower-income public schools, where many teachers are already overburdened. Furthermore, students at well-resourced schools are more likely to have received direct subject-matter instruction on topics and skills which might aid them in competing at Ethics Bowl events, e.g., critical thinking and logic, explicit instruction on moral theory, etc. Students and teachers from communities and schools with less access to resources often struggle to get involved with extracurricular programs like the Ethics Bowl, and often face barriers to consistent success once they have done so. NHSEB has made significant strides with respect to access and inclusion in recent years by providing support to many of its regional partners for targeted outreach to underserved schools and communities, with varying levels of success. In this spirit, many of our partners have built out specific diversification and outreach programs, from a new regional bowl focused on under-resourced Philadelphia schools, to the nation’s first Spanish-language and prison-based Ethics Bowl events in California. Beyond these strides with our regional partners, NHSEB’s HQ at the Parr Center for Ethics has also built a standing fund for travel assistance to those teams traveling to the NHSEB National Championships, held every April at UNC Chapel Hill. With these funds, we have thus far been able to successfully ensure that no team is prevented from participation at the national level for lack of financial resources. Despite these promising inroads with historically underserved populations, work remains to ensure that all U.S. high school students, regardless of demographic or geography, can access the benefits of what has become one of the largest public philosophy programs in the world. To make good on our stated commitment to comprehensive access, we propose a systematic, nationally deployed program to continue this important work. After an initial experimental pilot in 2020-2021, a fully developed version of NHSEBBridge will grow the Ethics Bowl activity, not only in terms of size and impact, but in terms of the demographic diversity of its constituents as well.

**Project Impact**

By focusing our recruiting efforts on underrepresented schools and communities (especially Title I public schools, schools with high minoritized student populations, and rural schools), we aim to provide those students and coaches with a premiere introduction to the Ethics Bowl activity, to philosophy as a method of inquiry, and to all the program’s benefits for students’ academic, social, and civic lives. By engaging high school students in intensive ethical inquiry at a crucial developmental stage, the NHSEB (introduced to new partners by NHSEBBridge) fosters constructive dialogue and enhances the next generation’s ability to make sound ethical decisions. Our collaborative model rewards students for the depth of their thought, their ability to think carefully and analytically about complex issues, and the respect they show for the diverse perspectives of their peers. As a result, it enables students to practice and build those virtues central to democratic citizenship, thus preparing them to navigate challenging moral issues in a rigorous, systematic, and open-minded way. As the home and HQ of the NHSEB program, the Parr Center for Ethics is committed to providing carefully designed and curated pedagogical resources that promote ethical literacy and reflection. Every year, thousands of students participating in the NHSEB work from case sets and discussion questions designed by our team at UNC-CH. The primary delivery mechanism for these is NHSEBAcademy (nhsebacademy.org), our online suite of pedagogical resources, ranging from static learning materials (print, graphics, etc.) to live appointment opportunities. We also have an abiding commitment to working with teachers to provide guidance on integrating ethical and philosophical reflection in the classroom. It is in the context of this robust network of ongoing efforts that our pedagogical aspirations for NHSEBBridge are situated. We recognize that the success of new teams
participating in NHSEB-Bridge hinges on the extent to which we are able to provide resources and feedback tailored specifically to their diverse needs and interests. To that end, we have devoted (and will continue to devote) considerable personnel, time, and attention to working with NHSEB-Bridge students and school leaders to ensure that our Ethics Bowl programming fits into their existing curricular and extra-curricular aims and constraints. By integrating NHSEB-Bridge with a service-learning course in the Department of Philosophy, we have signaled our commitment to deploying the full range of intellectual and financial resources at our institution in service of NHSEB-Bridge partners. Our course integration provides much-needed time and space specifically for the development of resources and opportunities that are tailored to the very different backgrounds from which our partners come. Grant funds would allow us to provide our partners with a comprehensive and rigorous pedagogical experience from start to finish, including the provision of ethics-related materials, books, and more, designed and curated by our dedicated team of philosophers at UNC.

**Project Goals**

- Design and deploy a carefully targeted outreach and recruitment program oriented toward schools and students who would otherwise be unable to participate in, learn from, and reap the benefits of a program like NHSEB.
- Provide a supportive, welcoming, and pedagogically rigorous introduction to the Ethics Bowl activity and to philosophical ethics as a way of thinking by leveraging existing intellectual and pedagogical resources at the Parr Center for Ethics and the UNC Department of Philosophy. This will include thoughtfully designed and curated ethics education resources, individualized coaching and training attention from UNC-based experts, and a near constant support and feedback structure as students and coaches participate in their first Ethics Bowl experience.
- Assess the inroads NHSEB is able to make with underserved populations by remaining in conversation with partner schools (and students, specifically) consistently throughout the season (e.g., in coaching sessions, practice matches, larger-scale events, and assessment focus groups).
- Continue a relationship of support as NHSEBBridge partners transition into a more typical participation experience with NHSEB, with a focus on ensuring not only their integration into the program but their continued success within its structure.

**Project Timeline**

June 2022: Begin targeted school recruiting and PHIL 292 course enrollment at UNC-CH
August 2022: Finalize NHSEB-Bridge team roster for 2022-2023
September 2022: Establish coaching partnerships between PHIL 292 students and partner schools
September-November 2022: Ongoing NHSEB-Bridge site visits (weekly frequency)
(Late) November 2022: NHSEB-Bridge Practice Bowl/PHIL 292 Capstone Pedagogy Event
December 2022-January 2023: NHSEB-Bridge Ethics Bowl
February 2023: NHSEB Regional Playoffs (winner of NHSEB-Bridge will advance)
February-March 2023: Administer assessment surveys/focus groups with partner schools
April 2023: NHSEB National Championship @ Chapel Hill (winner of NHSEB-Bridge may advance)
May 2023: Cultivate new regional bowl contacts in NHSEB-Bridge-targeted states
September 2023: NHSEB-Bridge partners join and participate in existing or expanded NHSEB regional infrastructure for 2023-2024 season
**Project Outreach**

NHSEB and our institutional home at Parr Center for Ethics have well-developed and established networks and strategies for outreach both within the academic and philosophical community as well as with wider, public audiences. These networks have been instrumental in the growth of the overall program, specifically in recruiting and supporting new Organizers, Coaches, and Students. For the NHSEBBridge project in particular, we plan to develop an increased presence among school-level contacts (teachers, administrators and system- or district-level officials), by employing: A direct-contact summer recruitment program for these constituencies based on systematized data collection in terms of school geography, demographics, resource level, etc. For NHSEBBridge, we’ll prioritize and target schools with Title I designations, schools in otherwise underserved or under-resourced communities, and schools which are in geographic areas NHSEB has not yet touched (e.g., the rural southwestern US and the upper midwest/mountain region). A strong and systematic social media campaign which emphasizes communication of the core values of the NHSEB program and the academic, social, and civic benefits of school and student participation in the same. This will involve both traditional engagement with social media presence as well as targeted ad segmentation using the recruitment priorities outlined above. A stronger public presence built around organizations our recruitment targets may already be involved in (e.g., a podcast series with the National Council for Social Studies, appearances at 9-12 teacher focused conferences, etc.) A comprehensive online presence, NHSEBAcademy (nhsebacademy.org), for delivering durable and useful ethics education resources and assistance to teams during and beyond their participation in NHSEBBridge. This includes static and interactive resources, a series of live events, an on-demand consultation/coaching program, and on-demand practice or “scrimmage” Ethics Bowl matches with students from other states or regions, using a new integration the Parr Center’s NHSEBOne competition platform (nhseb.unc.edu/one) the NHSEB’s institutional partnerships and networks to place NHSEBBridge teams within the existing NHSEB competition structure (or to create new regional events in their states) after their completion of the “Bridge” year.

**Accessibility Plan**

NHSEB is committed to ensuring comprehensive student access to our program: regardless of demographic, ability, resource level, geography, etc. NHSEBBridge is specifically designed to cater to those students from underserved and under-represented demographics and communities who may not otherwise enjoy the benefits of NHSEB programming. Because all coaching, event management, etc. in NHSEBBridge will be conducted virtually (either via traditional video conferencing or the Parr Center’s dedicated NHSEBOne platform), we are able to make great strides in terms of accessibility, as students can often join in from their own schools or homes where participation “as usual” might require activities funding, travel, and other potential barriers to access. Furthermore, we are committed to ensuring access to NHSEBBridge in particular by working with local school systems to provide (or financially subsidizing if necessary) consistent broadband access for student participants in the program. Contact for Accessibility Concerns: Alex Richardson, Director, National High School Ethics Bowl NHSEB will work closely with UNC’s Office of Accessibility Resources & Service (https://accessibility.unc.edu) so that we can respond fully and effectively to any request by participants to accommodate for disabilities or special needs. We will additionally work with UNC’s Office for the Protection of Minors (https://campussafety.unc.edu/protection-of-minors/) to ensure online safety and data security for all participants.
Evaluation Plan
Assessment and evaluation will play a crucial role in the future design of the program. We plan to assess NHSEBBridge in three primary ways. First, we will distribute surveys to all participants (one kind of survey for students involved, and another kind of survey for educators involved). The surveys will provide both quantitative and qualitative feedback. We will also invite all participants to meet with the two program coordinators, on a voluntary basis, to provide more detailed feedback and to elaborate on their responses in any way they wish. Second, we will host focus groups with past NHSEBBridge participants to gauge the potential interest and impact of future programmatic innovations, and to provide a space for airing ideas that might otherwise not be on our radar. Finally, we will establish a regular pattern of periodic follow ups with our past and present Bridge partners, specifically with a view to assessing the extent to which Ethics Bowl programming and resources have been taken up and integrated into our partner schools and classrooms.

Online Presence
Website, hosted by NHSEB and the Parr Center for Ethics Social media presence, @theparncenter on all major platforms NHSEBAcademy: Pedagogy resource hosting (nhsebacademy.org) NHSEBOne: Competition infrastructure and videoconferencing matches (nhseb.unc.edu/one)

nhseb.unc.edu/bridge

Budget Narrative
The Parr Center for Ethics funded a small experimental pilot of NHSEBBridge in 2020-2021 (https://dailynous.com/2020/10/22/program-bring-ethics-bowl-resourced-high-schools/), which served 5 schools across 5 states. Many of the students who participated in our pilot would not have otherwise been able to participate in the NHSEB program at all, and all will participate in existing NHSEB regionals in 2021-2022. Additional grant funding for the NHSEBBridge program would be transformational in terms of allowing our team to scale up NHSEBBridge to truly make a national-level impact on the NHSEB community at large. Our funding priorities are to incentivize and support schools and teachers who may already be overworked and overburdened in their coaching on NHSEBBridge teams, to provide a premiere pedagogical and ultimately competitive experience for students, and to ensure that the inroads we do make with underserved schools have longevity and potential for integration beyond NHSEB events themselves.

Other Funding Sources
Earmarks from overall NHSEB budget at the Parr Center will cover some expenses (though are currently unable to cover all proposed expenses), and proposals for additional funding are currently under review with existing donors to the NHSEB program.
American Philosophical Association Diversity Grant Budget Template

**Project Title:** NHSEBBridge: Promoting Student Access and Equity in the National High School Ethics Bowl

**Project Coordinator(s):** Alex Richardson, Michael Vazquez

**Total Funding Request:** (up to $10,000) $10,000.00

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**Total**  $27,000.00  $19,500.00  $10,000.00

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