



# putting together a budget raising funds to compete

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*By Julie Ekstedt*

Starting up a high school Academic Bowl team sounds simple. It would seem that all you have to do is find four or five interested deaf students, set up meetings, and compete. However, it is definitely not that easy. If it were, we would have a waiting list a mile long. What it comes down to are the dollars. Each team needs to find a way to compete at the regional competition. This means at least five to eight roundtrip airline tickets and usually accommodations for a chaperone.

*There are many ways to raise the money. Here are some strategies:*

- **MAKE USE OF ONE MALE AND ONE FEMALE COACH.** This cuts down on the cost for chaperones.
- **CHECK IN WITH GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY.** Gallaudet usually pays for accommodations and most meals for up to five players and two coaches. If you go above those numbers, you are on your own for the additional people.
- **FUNDRAISE AS A TEAM.** Successful fundraising includes selling candy, cakes, and treats and washing cars.
- **INCLUDE AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS.** Fundraising with your team can be used toward volunteer hours needed for graduation or to spice up college resumes. Encourage team members to return the support by hosting a pizza party or bowling competition—without spending all those hard-earned profits.
- **WRITE A GRANT.** If time is not on your side and you need to get a large sum of money quickly, then make grant writing part of the team's financial plan. Check out the Internet and local businesses and organizations. When explaining the purpose of the grant request, it is important to go into detail. Make sure you write clearly about

**Right:** Everyone is number one when funds are forthcoming.



*Photography by Hui Zhang*



the purpose of the money. For example, “The team needs funds for traveling expenses to and from [city, state], for uniforms, and for ground travel while at the competition.” Also explain that the Academic Bowl is “not only motivational, but raises the bar of rigorous scholarship for each team member and encourages others in the deaf and hard of hearing program to work toward academic excellence,” that their donation will further “expose our students to the deaf community beyond [your city], allowing them to meet other academically inclined deaf and hard of hearing students in the process.” Emphasize that a “small group that lacks critical mass makes fundraising difficult and it may jeopardize students’ ability to compete.” All these points in

the application for grant money help solidify your reason for financial need and give individuals and organizations a reason to want to give money to your team. (\* The quoted phrases are from a sample donation request that was given to the alumni association at Roosevelt High School.)

- **CHECK OUT YOUR SCHOOL**

The best resources are usually right in the school building. Here you may find people and organizations willing to make tax-deductible donations toward an academically driven team of deaf students. These organizations include the school’s alumni association, the school’s foundation that is responsible for donating money toward school improvements, both physical and

curricular, and the Parent Teacher Association. Many of these organizations ask for applications early in the school year, so start looking for the applications in your main office or with the school’s fiscal secretary when the school year begins. Make sure you identify the team as a recognized club so that the different donating organizations can contribute. Find out when the grants are awarded, and develop a good relationship with the school’s fiscal secretary to keep you in the loop and apprised of what you need to do when purchasing tickets or opening up an account with the school.

Although fundraising and grant writing require time, going to the competition is something that will benefit each member of your team—and it is an unforgettable experience. Good luck!