



Association for Practical and Professional Ethics Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl® History & Overview

Background & History

The Association for Practical and Professional Ethics Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl (APPE IEB®) was created by Robert Ladenson, Professor of Philosophy at the Illinois Institute of Technology. Ladenson first conducted an intramural ethics bowl tournament in 1993. Two years later he invited several nearby schools to take part and in 1997 the APPE IEB® was inaugurated as a national event with the organization of a competition involving 14 teams from colleges and universities throughout the United States. This event was held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics (APPE). By 2003 the field of participating schools had grown to 40, the largest number of teams that could be accommodated in a single day event given to logistical and space considerations. Beginning in 1999, other ethics bowls modeled on the APPE IEB® created by Ladenson were organized throughout the United States. To accommodate the large number of schools wanting to participate, an expansion plan was developed linking eight regional ethics bowls into a tiered competition. Beginning in 2006-07, the APPE IEB® became a tiered competition. As of 2020, 12 regional ethics bowls now take place in various locations throughout the United States. The top scoring teams in the regional ethics bowls then compete in the national ethics bowl competition held in conjunction with the annual APPE international conference. Any college/university that wishes to compete in the national ethics bowl must first compete and place at one of the regional ethics bowls.

Educational Objectives

In an ethics bowl match, teams are not assigned “pro” and “con” sides of an ethical issue. Rather, each team’s goal – in its preparations prior to the ethics bowl – is to ensure it has identified the ethically relevant considerations relative to the issues raised by the assigned cases and then analyze the importance of the considerations and deliberate to an agreement on positions that the team feels it can explain and defend. Likewise, an opposing team’s comment in an ethics bowl match is based upon its judgment concerning a position it can reasonably explain and defend on the case. The opposing team’s role is not necessarily to argue against the presenting team’s response, but to continue the discussion in a manner that exemplifies civil discourse regarding the best methods of ethical reasoning about complex, difficult to resolve, and highly viewpoint-dependent cases. Thus, “one-upsmanship,” and verbal aggressiveness will not win, and probably will lose, points in an ethics bowl match.

The judges' evaluation criteria reinforce efforts by a team to analyze issues presented by a case in a clear, focused, and thoughtful manner, helping them to understand and appreciate the force of considerations that weigh heavily in the thinking on the issues of others who take differing positions from their own.

Scoring Criteria

- **Clarity and Organization:** Has the team stated and defended its position in a way that is logically consistent and allows judges to understand clearly the team's line of reasoning?
- **Ethical Analysis:** Has the team identified and discussed the factors the judges consider ethically relevant in connection with the case? Is the team's analysis logically plausible?
- **Deliberative Thoughtfulness:** Does the team's presentation of its position on a question indicate both awareness and thoughtful consideration of different viewpoints, including especially those that could loom large in the reasoning of individuals who might disagree with the team's position?
- **Commentary on Opposing Team's Presentation and Response to Commentary:** Is the team's response to commentary collegial? Does it seek to deepen the ethical analysis of the case?
- **Response to Judges' Questions**

Association for Practical and Professional Ethics Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl® National Champions

1995	Western Michigan University		2010	University of Alabama Birmingham
1996	United States Air Force Academy		2011	University of Central Florida
1997	University of Montana		2012	Whitworth University
1998	United States Military Academy		2013	DePauw University
1999	United States Military Academy		2014	University of Montana
2000	University of Washington		2015	Taylor University
2001	Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi		2016	Whitworth University
2002	Wright State University		2017	United States Military Academy
2003	United States Naval Academy		2018	Santa Clara University
2004	Indiana University		2019	Whitworth University
2005	University of Washington		2020	Youngstown State University
2006	United States Military Academy		2021	University of Cincinnati
2007	University of Miami		2022	Macalester College
2008	Clemson University		2023	United States Naval Academy
2009	Indiana University			