Over the past 3 years, the Silicon Valley Urban Debate League has relied on its inaugural strategic plan to guide its work, adhering to its underlying principles while adjusting for an unprecedented global pandemic. Facing closed schools and home-bound students and staff, SVUDL quickly adapted its services and shifted online. We re-established and strengthened our Teacher Coach model and, through the leadership of our Program Team, increased the consistency and quality of our program implementation across all our sites. Consequently, in 2022 SVUDL served more students than ever before.

In addition to growing in reach, SVUDL continued to provide high quality programming - particularly in the competitive aspects of Speech and Debate. In 2021, two graduating students from Silver Creek High School (San Jose) became SVUDL’s first national championship winning team, going undefeated in The National Catholic Forensics League (NCFL) Grand Nationals tournament. At the very start of the 2022-2023 school year, 3 SVUDL students have already qualified for the prestigious Tournament of Champions (to be held at the University of Kentucky in April 2023). SVUDL students continue to inspire us, proving time and again that they not only deserve a seat the proverbial table, but that they can excel and lead when given that opportunity.

From a financial perspective, SVUDL’s shift back to the Teacher Coach model and adoption of a variety of operational efficiencies have allowed the organization to serve more students for less money. At the start of 2020, the cost per student for SVUDL’s programming was nearly $13,000 per student for an entire school year. That metric has dropped to an annual cost of just under $3,400 per student in 2022.

In partnership with a stellar pro-bono team from an internationally-renowned strategic consulting firm, the Silicon Valley Urban Debate League is excited to build off the successes of its inaugural strategic plan as it unveils this 2023 – 2025 Strategic Plan. We invite you to take part in learning about and supporting this next chapter in SVUDL’s journey to empower Silicon Valley students, regardless of their race or socioeconomic status, to reach their full potential and become professional and community leaders.

Sincerely,

Andrew Gold  
Board Chair

Rolland Janairo  
Executive Director
Our Theory of Change is a visual representation of how we expect SVUDL programming to contribute to a cascade of positive outcomes for the students, and eventually young professionals, we work with.

SVUDL's Theory of Change should be read from left to right as a logical chain of “if… then” statements. If we are successful in providing quality Speech & Debate and programming to engaged students, then we will achieve our immediate outcomes. SVUDL alumni will be more likely to achieve the intermediate and long-term outcomes in our Theory of Change. This cascade of positive outcomes will bring us closer to our vision in which all Silicon Valley youth have personal agency, achieve success, and contribute to their communities.
In 2022, SVUDL partnered with an internationally-renowned strategic consulting firm to develop the inputs for the organization’s next three-year strategic plan. This firm assessed opportunities and key growth drivers across products & offerings, donors & outreach, and funding model aspects of the organization. This firm also provided a range of specific strategic recommendations and a timeline for the growth trajectory of the business. To inform their analysis and recommendations, the pro-bono team undertook a broad range of interviews and data gathering that included:

- Discussions with key internal and external stakeholders, including:
  - Urban Debate Leagues in Los Angeles, NYC, Boston, and Miami
  - Teacher Coaches
  - Current students and alumni
  - Board of Directors
  - Melissa Wade (Founder of Urban Debate League concept)
  - Current & Former SVUDL Employees
- Surveys of students, Teacher Coaches, and donors (including the Board of Directors)
- Organization SWOT and historical donor base analysis
- Fully filtered addressable market analysis
- Identification of run-rate expense profile
- 3-Statement Financial Model to illustrate growth and expenditure required to build cash buffer

Based on their thorough analyses, the strategic consulting firm presented a series of recommendations to inform SVUDL’s next 3-year strategic plan.

1. Organization identity – SVUDL should center its identity around the organic effects of competitive debate, the life changing impacts it has on students as well as the diversifying effect those students will then have as they go to college and begin their careers. Over time, SVUDL has an opportunity to align its identity as it pertains to the intersection between debate and civics.

2. Product hierarchy – competitive Speech and Debate are at the core of the urban debate concept and should be the product that management leads with, layering Speech and Debate curriculum and Debate Centered Instruction in support of the competitive programs.

3. Scale and market penetration – the firm conducted a full addressable market analysis in Silicon Valley (and further south) at both the high school and middle school grade levels, providing SVUDL with a viable roadmap for future, efficient partnership development.

4. Donor expansion, partnerships, and cash buffer – the firm provided a donor acquisition strategy that advises SVUDL to make more data-driven decisions as it pertains to fundraising, reduce donor “churn,” and enact a targeted marketing approach to diversify and secure new support.

5. Success management – SVUDL should explore alternative/additional ways of measuring impact that can subsequently be communicated to schools and donors. This may include improvement in students’ grades and SAT scores, debate tournament results, or alumni career tracking.

Taking the strategic consulting firm’s recommendations into consideration, over the next three years SVUDL will look to expand and scale the foundational programming it solidified in its prior strategic plan. To do this, we’ve identified four key priorities that will continue to deepen and broaden our impact on underrepresented youth from low-income backgrounds living in Silicon Valley.

**Strategic Priority #1**
Scale our programs utilizing a multi-pronged approach that maximizes participation with our school and community partners.

**Strategic Priority #2**
Build a community of educators who will broaden our reach and deepen our impact.

**Strategic Priority #3**
Expand our impact measurements and share them with the community to earn and grow philanthropic investment and institutional and community support.

**Strategic Priority #4**
Evolve organizational capacity to support efficient, impactful growth and contribute to the overall financial sustainability of the organization.
SVUDL recognizes these skills to be essential, not only to competitive success, but to success in professional and academic settings. SVUDL’s focus on the development of these skills will inform the short, middle, and long-term outcomes we seek for students and alumni, as outlined in SVUDL’s Theory of Change.

SVUDL’s programming is delivered via 3 primary modes:

1. Afterschool competitive Speech & Debate enrichment programs: SVUDL program specialists support Teacher Coaches to train students to compete in Speech and Debate events in an afterschool setting. SVUDL hosts “closed” events for students from our partner schools; and SVUDL provides financial, logistical, and coaching support for students to compete in local and national tournaments.

2. A-G approved curricula for Speech and Debate elective classes: SVUDL’s college-preparatory elective (G track: Rhetoric & the Art of Advocacy) and its English elective (B track: Literacy and Advocacy: An Introduction to the Speech Arts) teach students how to participate in civil deliberation over controversial social questions by researching, constructing positions, and debating about issues of civic importance. Students who participate in one of these curricula during the school day are encouraged, if not required, to compete in Speech and Debate tournaments as a means of demonstrating learning and competency. Such a requirement symbiotically feeds into the afterschool enrichment program.

3. Debate Centered Instruction (DCI): SVUDL supports teachers as they present the background knowledge and main lines of argument about a controversy that aligns with their already existing curriculum. Students hear from professionals on the topic of controversy and then deliver in class speeches/participate in debates on the controversy. DCI teachers also invite students to compete in Speech and Debate tournaments to again demonstrate mastery of content and skills. This further solidifies the work, culture, and strength of the afterschool enrichment program.

Schools can opt into any combination of these modes of delivery. The modes of delivery utilized will be mostly determined by the strength of the Teacher Coach onsite, administrative and student buy-in, and the overall culture of the school or community partner. Reserving flexibility and room for future evolutions, it is these 3 modes of delivery that will define the program’s growth over the next 3 years. Furthermore, SVUDL will use the learnings, tools, and resources it developed within the virtual space during the COVID pandemic to continue to serve students and teachers in a hybrid manner, heavily relying on technology and virtual offerings to augment in-person activities.
Underlying and informing all of our work will be six core Organizational Values that will illustrate and reiterate the why and how the SVUDL team will accomplish this lofty work. In 2022, after immersing itself in professional development sessions that focused on IDEAL principles (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access, and Liberation), the SVUDL team and Board of Directors collaborated to create its inaugural set of organizational values. These values will be incorporated into its everyday programming and will also inform how we interact with community members and each other. It will be integrated into all hiring practices and processes, as well as annual performance reviews.

Our Organizational Values inform SVUDL’s culture, and are critically aligned with the very skills we seek to develop and with the cultural and social realities of the students of color whom we serve:

1. **We are guided by a purposeful mission.**
   We leverage the power of Speech and Debate to elevate the life outcomes of students – primarily students from low-income backgrounds, and students of color. This mission guides all strategic and tactical work, informs decision-making at all levels, and is an inherent part of all programming. Students will be given the opportunity to develop skills necessary for professional and personal success in ways that align with their developmental, emotional, and physical needs. They will also be encouraged to be civically engaged and transformative members of our democracy by exercising their agency and voice in matters of critical importance to our culture and society.

2. **Our work is rooted in authentic relationships with the community it serves.**
   We appreciate the strengths and perspectives of all our community members, as well as the unique challenges they face. Developing authentic relationships within its community will allow SVUDL to achieve impactful work towards achieving its mission, disrupt patterns of exclusion within the community, and empower students to be agents of change in the broader society.

3. **We believe in students’ dreams and agency.**
   All students deserve the opportunity to succeed and pursue their personal and professional paths. Our team will help them develop the tools they will need to achieve future success in higher education and the workforce. Students will think critically and express themselves effectively, speak from their own experiences, discover their passions and concerns, and articulate them as advocates for themselves and their communities. We will also help them build their personal and professional networks that will empower them to participate in, and help create, a more equitable future. Whether in a round of competition or a seat at the proverbial table, students will utilize these tools as self-identified, active change agents.

4. **We lead with compassion and empathy.**
   We recognize the full lives and identities of all members of our community, in all their complexities. For all community members, we strive to celebrate personal and professional achievements, recognize and appreciate challenges, and offer support where appropriate. We respect and work towards work-school-life balance, and model positive mental health practices to students and each other.

5. **We rely on critical teamwork to achieve great things.**
   SVUDL’s success is dependent on effective collaboration and teamwork, both inside and outside the organization. We strive to develop a working environment that is welcoming, embraces the voices and perspectives of all, celebrates success, and creates a culture where there is freedom to make mistakes and take chances. Feedback is shared openly and constructively to encourage a growth and learning mindset.

6. **We strive for excellence in our work.**
   SVUDL strives to create and implement high quality programming on behalf of the students we serve. Team members follow through on their commitments and practice diligence and responsibility. SVUDL also helps students identify their strengths, challenging them to achieve their highest potential – in competitions and beyond.
Strategic Priority #1
Scale our programs utilizing a multi-pronged approach that maximizes participation with our school and community partners.

During its engagement with SVUDL, the strategic consulting firm created a “SVUDL Addressable Market Analysis & Model” that will define the pathway of school and district engagement over the next 3 years, giving SVUDL the means to determine a tangible recruitment strategy of schools working with its target population in a more strategic way.

This recruitment strategy will focus first on a formalized partnership with the East Side Union High School District, which serves the largest number of students of color, and students from low-income backgrounds, in our immediate geographic area. Further expansion will pivot to San Mateo County, and into partnerships with middle school districts that send students to our high school partners, allowing us to bring high quality programming to students for up to 7 total years.

SVUDL also has the opportunity over the next 3 years to determine how to leverage its existing and future A-G approved curricula, and associated lesson modules and teacher training, to expand its reach in ways that require minimal additional resources. Visible avenues that SVUDL is already exploring include partnering with school districts, County Offices of Education, and community-based organizations and nonprofits working with the same target population.

2023 MILESTONES

• Start and develop afterschool practices at two new sites.
• Develop deeper participation in Impromptu Speaking events with the addition of two league schools attending tournaments before end of 2022-2023 school year.
• Develop deeper participation in Public Forum events with the addition of two league schools participating in this division at SVUDL tournaments before end of 2022-2023 school year.

2024 MILESTONES

• Start and develop afterschool practices at two new sites.
• Launch a travel team by beginning of 2023-2024 school year that will compete in the national circuit in addition to local tournaments.
• Develop deeper participation in Interpretive events with the addition of two league schools participating in this division at SVUDL tournaments during second half of 2023-2024 school year.

2025 MILESTONES

• Start and develop afterschool practices at two new sites.
• Develop deeper participation in Extramural Speaking events with the addition of two league schools participating in this division at SVUDL tournaments by two during second half of 2024-2025 school year.
• Develop deeper participation in Oratory events with the addition of two league schools participating in this division at SVUDL tournaments during second half of 2024-2025 school year.

OBJECTIVES

Continue SVUDL afterschool enrichment by increasing the number of school sites that offer Speech and Debate practices and expansion so that SVUDL students can learn Speech and Debate during the school day.

Continue curriculum development and expansion so that SVUDL students can learn Speech and Debate at the high school level.

Continue DCI development and expansion so that SVUDL students are introduced to portable skills in research, speaking, and advocacy inside traditional subject classrooms.

Develop district and community partnerships that will widen our reach, focusing primarily on Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, with an eye on expansion into Monterey County.

We will work with more students in our target population than ever before.

2023 MILESTONES

• By March 2023, utilize existing ESUHSD A-G approved interdisciplinary course to teach Speech and Debate I in partner school.
• By March 2023, get newly A-G approved English curriculum approved by the East Side Union High School District for implementation in 2023-2024 school year.
• Develop curriculum expansion plan by June 2023, for teaching beyond current school partners.

2024 MILESTONES

• By March 2024, utilize existing ESUHSD A-G approved interdisciplinary course to teach Speech and Debate in another partner school.
• By March 2024, get another A-G curriculum approved in the A Track, Social Studies (with a focus on contemporary Ethnic studies), in order to attract social studies teachers with Speech and Debate centered curriculum and lesson that fulfills the state’s requirement regarding Ethnic Studies.
• Refine curriculum expansion plan by June 2024 based on prior year’s learnings.

2025 MILESTONES

• By March 2025, get another A-G curriculum approved in the F Track, Visual and Performing Arts in order to attract theater teachers to teach competitive Speech events within their subject expertise.
• Recalibrate model and re-perform Addressable Market & Consulting firm analysis by May to inform decisions on school partners in subsequent years.

• By May 2025 train and guide teachers in the use of DCI in Language Arts classrooms in two SVUDL partner schools.
• By June 2025 create a pilot DCI program to be used in a Science classroom.

• By January 2023, research, construct and guide Spring semester DCI units for Andrew Hill CTE course.
• By March 2023 research, construct and guide Spring semester DCI units for East Palo Alto Academy Government course.
• By June 2023 create a pilot DCI program to be used in a partner school Social Study classroom.

• By May 2024 train and guide teachers in the use of DCI in social studies classrooms in two SVUDL partner schools.
• By June 2024 create a pilot DCI program to be used in a partner school Language Arts classroom.

• By February 2023, develop district partnership offering for wider DCI and/or elective rollout.
• By June 2023, confirm East Side Union High School District as 1st partner for wider DCI and/or elective rollout.
• By December, recruit at least one senior school or district administrator to the Board of Directors.
• Continue to offer at least 2 student-focused events per quarter with legal and corporate partners as part of our Professional Access and Mentoring Program.

• Implement programming with at the East Side Union High School District for wider DCI and/or elective rollout, in partnership with Teacher Coaches and DCI teachers.
• Confirm 2nd partner by December for 2024-2025 school year.
• Continue to offer at least 2 student-focused events per quarter with legal and corporate partners as part of our Professional Access and Mentoring Program.

• Reach at least 620 students in Speech and Debate programming, 310 of whom will participate at our deepest level of engagement.
• Evaluate school lead success and market penetration (strategic consulting firm analysis) by May to inform decisions on school partners in subsequent year.

• Reach at least 800 students in Speech and Debate programming, 450 of whom will participate at our deepest level of engagement.
• Recalibrate model and re-perform Addressable Market & Pipeline analysis by February.

• Reach at least 1000 students and youth in Speech and Debate programming, 600 of whom will participate at our deepest level of engagement.
• Recalibrate model and re-perform Addressable Market & Pipeline analysis by February.
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<tr>
<td>Build a community of educators who will broaden our reach and deepen our impact.</td>
<td>Create a structured space for reflection on practice.</td>
<td>Create a Practitioner’s Library to inform the Community or Practice regarding best practices.</td>
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<td><strong>OBJECTIVES</strong></td>
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<td>Create a community that supports teacher excellence and develops professional skill.</td>
<td>Beyond SVUOL’s talented and noteworthy staff, the organization has an opportunity to leverage the community of teachers it has recruited to work with students directly at its partner schools.</td>
<td>This group of teachers is an untapped resource that -- if supported and nurtured effectively -- can deepen our impact and short-term student outcomes, grow the capacity of our overall team, increase the sustainability of our programs at our partner schools, and serve as a pipeline for future staff members and consultants.</td>
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<td>• Formalize Coach Development plan by August 2023.</td>
<td>• Collect teacher survey on the efficacy of the Community of Practice by April 2024.</td>
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<td>• Launch a formal Community of Practice for all Teachers Coaches by September 2023.</td>
<td>• Refine (based on prior year) and execute Coach Development plan by August 2024.</td>
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<td>• Launch formal professional development series by October 2023.</td>
<td>• Maintain a formal Community of Practice for all Teachers Coaches by September 2024.</td>
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<td>• Continue to meet with Program Advisory Council quarterly to inform programmatic improvements and develop this Community of Practice.</td>
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<td>• Develop a curated Practitioner’s Library of best practices for Speech and Debate teachers by July 2023.</td>
<td>• Collect teacher survey on the efficacy of the Community of Practice by April 2024.</td>
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<td>• Post resources in a searchable, user-friendly manner on the existing Coaches Hub by August 2023.</td>
<td>• Revise the offerings in the Practitioners Library based on feedback from suggestions from teachers and post on the coaches hub by August 2024.</td>
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<td>• By April, develop and learn from a formalized feedback loop with teachers that will increase teacher community engagement, fosters additional content development by teachers, and strengthens and expands the overall community.</td>
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<td>• Educators will select two salient articles on a topic related to practice from the Practitioner’s Library to form a Fall and Spring community of practice reading group by September 2023.</td>
<td>• Educators will formalize a series of recommendations for broader Community of learning on the basis of Spring reading group findings in April 2024.</td>
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<td>• Begin once monthly reading group meetings where practitioners reflect upon how their experience relates to an article chosen by the community of learning by October 2023.</td>
<td>• Select two salient articles chosen by educators in Community of Learning to form a Fall and Spring community of practice reading group by September 2024.</td>
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<td>• Formalize a series of recommendations for community of learning on the basis of Fall reading group findings in December 2023.</td>
<td>• Begin once monthly reading group meetings where practitioners reflect upon how their experience relates to an article chosen by the community of learning by October 2024.</td>
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Strategic Priority #3
Expand our impact measurements and share them with the community to earn and grow philanthropic investment and institutional and community support.

Another one of the firm’s key recommendations to SVUDL over the next 3 years is to define a simple way of tracking outcomes that will be key to monitoring the success of the new strategic objectives. Donors have indicated they seek greater visibility into the impact their funds have, and this will only increase as the donor base diversifies and funds come from areas less directly associated with competitive debate, such as law firms.

During its prior strategic plan, SVUDL developed efficient systems to track the outputs of its program – namely, the number of students it served and in what “dosage.” Moving forward, SVUDL will develop systems that will illustrate the outcome-focused impact of its programming, including but not limited to sharing the program’s positive relationship to students’
- GPAs
- Test scores
- Graduation rates
- Matriculation into higher education

In addition, SVUDL will also share quantitative improvements on students’ (self-reported) changes in attitude and behaviors as it relates to competition, public speaking, civic engagement, and future outlook. SVUDL will compare its impact and success to local and national studies and data sets, seeking to surpass benchmarks outlined in those resources.

Identify and report on new quantitative and qualitative impact measurement to illustrate the impact of SVUDL’s programming.
- Collect data and report on one new quantitative metric by July and include in Annual Impact Report.
- Create and share at least one in-depth story about a SVUDL alum by July and incorporate into Annual Impact Report.
- Continue to track participation metrics and report to Board on monthly basis.
- By August, report on students’ success as it relates to academic performance metrics and social emotional learning benchmarks. Incorporate data into Annual Impact Report.

Develop a revised marketing plan highlighting the impact of SVUDL’s programming to solidify and expand donor base.
- Develop a marketing plan by January.
- Deliver annual Impact Report by September.
- Refine annual marketing plan by January and continue execution.
- Deliver annual Impact Report by September.

Launch a full-fledged alumni network.
- Ensure CRM is ready to host data related to alumni by May 2023.
- Develop alumni programming and initial offerings by June 2023.
- Conduct outreach to SVUDL alum for participation in the network by July 2023.
- Obtain data and stories from alumni via annual survey (completed by May 2024) and ongoing marketing pieces (at least 3 per year).
- Continue to provide robust offerings to alumni that leverage existing programming with current students, Legal Advisory Committee, Board of Directors, and Young Professionals Network. Develop and launch calendar of offerings by June 2024.
- Obtain data and stories from alumni via annual survey (completed by May 2025) and ongoing marketing pieces (at least 3 per year).
- Refine robust offerings to alumni launch calendar of offerings by June 2025.
## Strategic Priority #4

**Evolve organizational capacity to support efficient, impactful growth and contribute to the overall financial sustainability of the organization.**

Pursuant to the continued growth and deepening of our programs, SVUDL will need to align its operations around our strategic plan, increase its funding, and ensure the long-term sustainability of the organization.

### OBJECTIVES

1. **Raise sufficient money to fund operations consistent with the Strategic Plan, including at least 4 months of reserve funds.**
   - Create annual Development plan in line with strategic and annual operating plans, by December 1st.
   - Raise at least $1M by December.

2. **SVUDL staff members are well-trained, meet or exceed expectations, and rate their satisfaction at 80% or higher on the annual staff satisfaction survey.**
   - By December, performance management system updated, and all individual team members have annual goals that connect back to strategic and annual operating plans.
   - By March, basic capacity assessment conducted to determine professional development needs.
   - By August, mid-year staff performance reviews conducted.

3. **Ensure the organization is adequately staffed to execute on strategic priorities for the year.**
   - Determine staffing plan for subsequent year by October and prepare job descriptions and hiring process for new hires accordingly.

4. **Monitor all operations to ensure the organization continues to uphold its values and IDEAL principles (Inclusion; Diversity; Equity; Access; Liberation).**
   - Conduct a structured review on a quarterly basis to ensure organizational values and IDEAL principles are reflected in everyday operations.
   - Ensure organizational values are incorporated into annual review process by December.

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