



KEES Client Partner, Chicago Debates, names Anthony J. Bolden Jr. as its next Executive Director

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Chicago Debates, a non-profit dedicated to advancing the educational achievements, community contributions, and life success of Chicago's youth through the transformative power of academic debate, has promoted Anthony J. Bolden Jr. to Executive Director. Providing strategic oversight to and overall executive leadership for Chicago Debates, Anthony assumes this new role effective January 3, 2023.

After nearly three years serving Chicago Debates as Director and then Senior Director of Programs, and most recently acting as the Interim Executive Director,

Anthony has developed a deep understanding of how Chicago Debates' mission impacts the lives of young people. During his tenure to date, Anthony has collaboratively built a programming team, created and standardized a virtual programming model, successfully rolled out a new student application, and engaged over 20 new Title 1 schools in Chicago Debates' work. Throughout the pandemic, Anthony and his team served more than 2,100 students across the Chicago Public Schools while engaging more than 400 volunteers each year. Under his leadership, the program team has additionally expanded program offerings to include new forms of debate.

"Years ago, when I first applied for a position with Chicago Debates, I was drawn to the tremendous impact that debate could have on a young person's life. Having had the opportunity to build 'first-ever' debate teams at struggling Chicago Public Schools and then watch those same debate teams produce their school's most engaged and successful young minds is why I look forward to coming to work each day," said Anthony. "Our program works, and I continue to be proud to promote our mission to help build, empower, and amplify our students' voices -- ultimately producing more informed and prepared young leaders. Serving and leading as Chicago Debates' next Executive Director is the honor of a lifetime."

Anthony holds a Bachelor of Arts in Music and a Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies, both from Oakwood University in Huntsville, AL, and a Graduate Certification in Nonprofit Management from North Park University. Additionally, Anthony is a Chicago Urban League IMPACT Leadership Development Fellow Alumnus at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business and a Forefront Educational Equity Fellow Alumnus.

Prior to joining Chicago Debates, Anthony was the Program Manager at Partnership to Educate and Advance Kids (PEAK), a nonprofit with a mission to “provide opportunities for underserved youth to achieve academic and personal success.” Additionally, Anthony served as Associate Pastor at Oakwood University Church in Huntsville, AL prior to his term at PEAK.

“Through creative leadership and strategic decision-making, I am confident that Anthony will successfully lead and further elevate Chicago Debates, and its reputation as a community leader and champion for debate, youth, achievement, and education,” said Eli Kay-Oliphant, Chicago Debates’ Board Chair. “Anthony’s own lived experience, combined with his leadership, dedication, and optimism will ensure Chicago Debates enjoys another 25+ years of impactful service. We are delighted to promote Anthony to the role of Executive Director and thank KEES for another successful partnership.”

Chicago Debates retained KEES, a national executive search firm for nonprofits, as its executive search partner earlier in 2022, launching a comprehensive search. This partnership builds upon KEES’s history and expanding relationships with individual Leagues across the Urban Debate network, as well as with the National Association for Urban Debate Leagues. Anthony was selected from a talented pool of top finalists. Leading the search efforts were Board and Search Committee Chair Eli Kay-Oliphant (Partner – Sparacino PLLC) and Search Committee members Amit Bindra (Partner – The Prinz Law Firm, P.C.), Elisa Davis (Assistant General Counsel, Corporate & Compliance – Kaplan), Sharone Mitchell, Jr. (Cook County Public Defender), Cindy Stuyvesant (Assistant General Counsel – Wintrust Financial), Tania White (CEO and Chief HR Strategist – Canary HR Consulting), and Jessica Yeats (Principal Data Scientist – NVIDIA).

“Anthony has dedicated his career to date to encourage and support young people’s growth and success,” said Laura Weinman, KEES Vice President. “The entire KEES team congratulates Chicago Debates and looks forward to seeing the continued positive change for Chicago students to reach their full potential in their chosen future path.”

ABOUT KEES

KEES (formerly Alford Executive Search) is a nonprofit executive search firm that builds diverse teams with dynamic leaders in the nonprofit and public sectors. KEES has partnered with several Debate Leagues across the country on a number of searches for Executive Director and Director of Development roles. A woman owned and operated

firm, KEES offers a full array of nonprofit consulting services including executive search, leadership development, interim staffing, and HR support. For more information, please visit www.kees2success.com.

ABOUT CHICAGO DEBATES

Chicago Debates envisions a world in which Chicago youth are empowered to find their voice, succeed in college and career, and become leaders in their community. Since its inception in 1995, Chicago Debates' Chicago Public Schools partnership has grown from an initial five high schools on the south side to over 90 middle and high schools throughout the city. Chicago Debates has become one of the most competitive policy urban debate leagues in the country, and a national model for other urban leagues. We envision a world in which Chicago youth are empowered to find their voice, succeed in college and career, and become leaders in their community. For more information, visit www.chicagodebates.org.

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