

Rooted in Truth, *Built for the Future*

"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness."

COLOSSIANS 2:6-7 (NIV)

FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Deep roots make room to build.

Our 2025-26 theme, Rooted in Truth, was more than a banner over a season. It described what God has been doing in this league for more than 16 years. Stoa began in 2009 with a simple conviction: that homeschool students, trained well, could speak with clarity, grace, and courage from a Biblical worldview. That conviction has not changed. It is the root system from which everything else grows.

This year we saw what deep roots make possible. Stoa completed the largest season in its history. We finished the StoaHub launch, unveiled a renewed mission, vision, and values at the National Invitational Tournament of Champions (NITOC), opened competition online through Clash in the Cloud, and built new tools that help clubs, coaches, and judges serve students well.

None of this happened by accident. It happened because parents coached, judges freely gave of their time, club leaders opened their homes and churches, and students kept showing up to do hard things. As you read these pages, we pray you will see God's faithfulness in every chapter, and that you will be as excited as we are about what He is building next.



Janice Tham

President, Stoa Board of Directors

Rooted *in Truth*

“...continue to live your lives in him, **rooted**...”

Every tournament, club meeting, and practice round in Stoa grows from the same root: students learning to **think critically, engage graciously, and speak boldly from a Biblical worldview.**

The 2025–26 theme, Rooted in Truth, called students back to that foundation. In a season of real growth, the league held to what has always made it Stoa: Christ-centered community, competitive excellence, and families who invest deeply in one another.

That foundation has carried Stoa through every kind of season. The league grew to a plateau in its first decade, slipped through a difficult stretch that included the pandemic years, and has since rebuilt to an all-time high.

2009

Founded

A group of leaders launches Stoa to serve Christian homeschool families in speech and debate.

2010s

A steady first decade

Stoa establishes clubs, tournaments, and NITOC as the heart of a national community.

2019–21

A testing season

Membership dips through a hard stretch that includes the pandemic, and the league holds together.

2021–23

A strong rebound

Families return and new families arrive, with back-to-back years of growth above 25 percent.

2025–26 • Record season

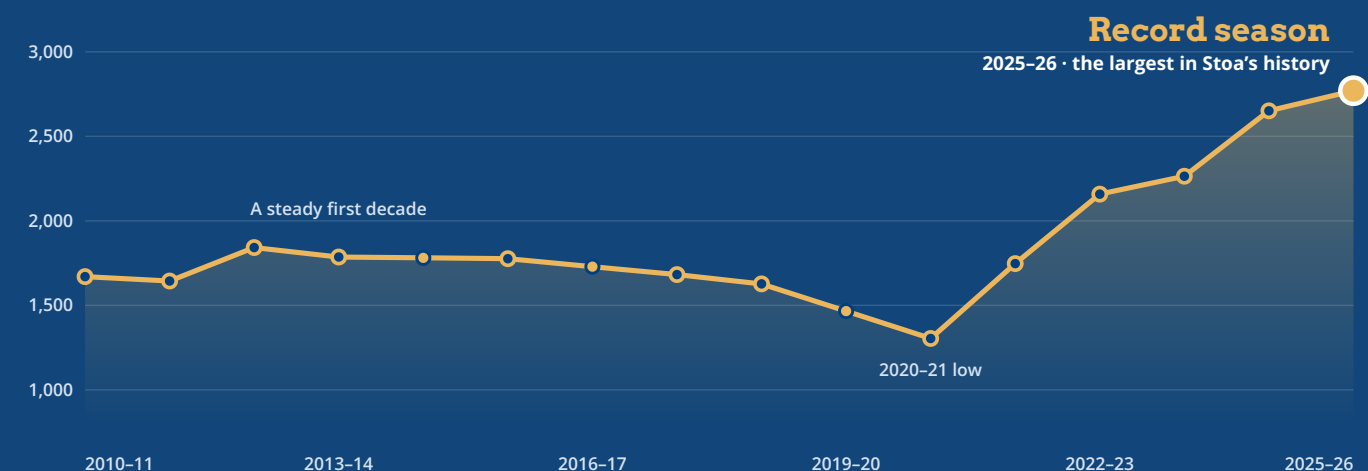
The largest season in Stoa’s history

Family membership has grown about 70 percent in five seasons, to an all-time high.

Students by season

2010–11 through 2025–26

A steady first decade, a hard stretch, and a climb to an all-time high



Three early seasons are estimated from neighboring years, since the registration system in use at the time did not record every student.

Our mission, vision, and values

After a year of prayerful work by the Board, Stoa unveiled renewed guiding statements at NITOC in May 2026. They say plainly who we are, what we believe, and where we are headed.

MISSION

We equip homeschool students, through competitive speech and debate, to think critically, engage graciously, and speak boldly from a Biblical worldview.

VISION

Until generations of faithful and compelling communicators make Jesus Christ known in every sphere.

VALUES

Biblical Worldview

God’s word is the authority for our organization and our lives. We strive to align every aspect of the organization to the truth of Scripture.

People

Every person matters. We believe each individual bears the image of God and deserves to be treated with dignity, encouragement, and genuine care. We invest in the growth of those we serve and build relationships that extend beyond competition.

Excellence

We pursue the highest standards of communication, character, and organizational practice. We strive for excellence in tournament standards, student competition, personal integrity, and leadership.

Christ-Centered Community

We prioritize gracious, servant-hearted relationships within our league, fostering a supportive environment that honors family and encourages discipleship among all participants.

Local Freedom and Shared Stoa Standard

We establish clear league standards that protect our mission, integrity, and identity, while empowering local communities with the freedom to implement, innovate, and lead in ways that best serve our families. We believe unity in essentials creates space for creativity in application.

Stewardship

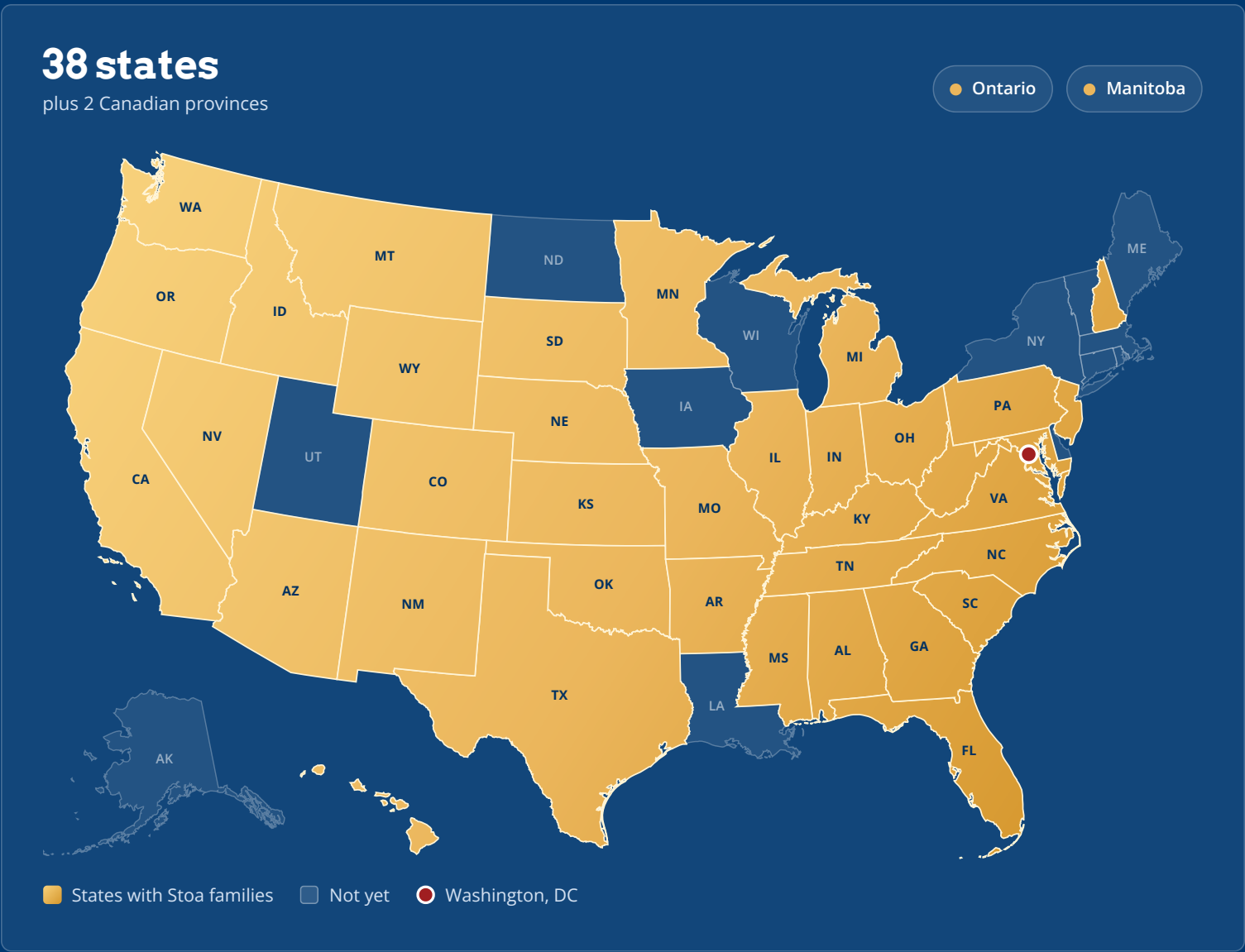
We steward our time, talent, and finances with integrity and sustainability, ensuring the faithful advancement of the mission for future generations.



For several years, we had been praying that Stoa’s vision and mission would more clearly convey its meaning, and when I heard the change this year, the call to speak boldly from a Biblical worldview and make Christ known in every sphere, I was in joyful tears.

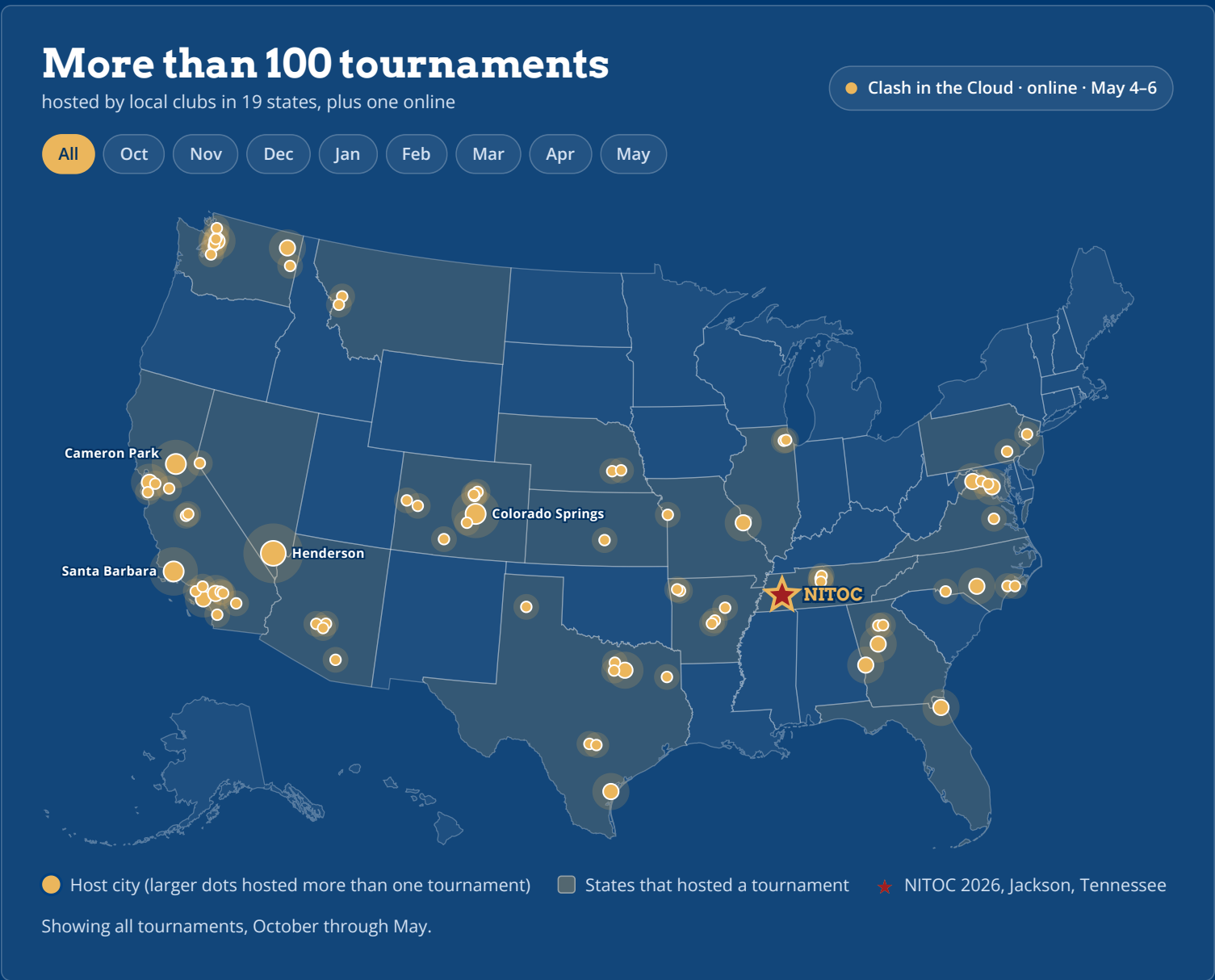
Where Stoa families live

From coast to coast, Stoa families are raising students who think critically, engage graciously, and speak boldly from a Biblical worldview.



Where Stoa competed

Local clubs hosted tournaments across the country, and Clash in the Cloud brought competition online for students anywhere.



The National Invitational Tournament of Champions

May 17–23, 2026 · Union University · Jackson, Tennessee

For one week in May, Stoa’s national community gathered in one place. Students who had qualified throughout the season came to Jackson, Tennessee, with their families, their coaches, and their clubs, and Union University opened its campus and its heart to us all.

The week began with anticipation and nerves and ended with awards. In between were hundreds of rounds, prayers in hallways before competition, devotions led each morning by Stoa dads, and late-night swing dancing with friends. Judges came from the Jackson community and from across the country. Rain came too, one unforgettable Tuesday night, and the tournament ran on.

Seniors were honored, the Founders Awards were given, and the final rounds closed the season. Families went home tired, encouraged, and already talking about next year.

Worship and Word

Morning devotions and a worship night helped remind us all why we were really there.

Competition

Excellence, integrity, and good old-fashioned drive to do our best drove the many rounds of the week.

Community

Socials, cafeteria dinners, and friendships that stretch across state lines.



Voices from the season

From the NITOC 2026 surveys.

“I was so excited for friends who made it far, and really felt that same warmth and excitement from others, supporting me instead of being upset or jealous in any way. The community and camaraderie in this league is a large part of what makes it what it is!”

Stoa student · North Carolina

“It was incredible to see the mutual respect the kids had for one another, and even though they competed against each other, the encouragement they gave one another was inspiring. Morning devotions really set the tone for the day.”

Stoa parent · North Carolina

“After a moving speech or an excellent round, the kids would shake my hand, look me in the eye, and say ‘Thank you for judging,’ not casually but like they meant it. Kids really do know how to rise to a challenge with grace, and that is something we could all learn from.”

Community judge · NITOC 2026

Built Up *for the Future*

“...and **built up** in him...”

New this year

Initiatives that strengthen Stoa today and prepare it for the next generation of students.

COMPETITION

Clash in the Cloud

Stoa’s online debate tournament opened competition to students wherever they live. The spring 2026 edition offered Team Policy, Lincoln-Douglas, and Parliamentary debate, and a fall edition has since followed as the new season began.

For students far from a local tournament

IDENTITY

A rewritten mission, vision, and values

Unveiled at NITOC 2026, these statements now guide every program and decision. [Read them in Chapter I.](#)

For the whole Stoa community

TOOLS

The Stoa Rulebook app

Every speech event’s rules in one place, available on phones and offline for maximum convenience.

For students, coaches, and judges

TOOLS

Script Compliance Review

A streamlined way to review scripts against the rulebook before students compete.

For coaches and reviewers

ORGANIZATION

A league reorganized to serve

Stoa added an Associate Director and expanded its administrative support. The Venue Search, Marketing, and Advancement and Partnerships Committees moved in-house rather than relying on volunteers. The result is steadier, year-round attention to the work that keeps the league growing, and a Stoa that can plan further ahead.

For every family Stoa serves

GUIDANCE

AI Task Force

A task force developed Stoa’s position on artificial intelligence in speech and debate preparation.

For families navigating new technology

COMPETITION

New speech events

Two wildcard options returned, and members voted in a new interpretive event, Literary Interpretation.

For speech competitors

COMING JANUARY 2027

A new website and look

A new online home and a refreshed visual identity are complete and will be revealed together in January 2027.

For every family, current and future



BETWEEN ROUNDS AT NITOC 2026

Where last year's goals stand

Last year's report named the goals Stoa would pursue in 2025–26. Here is where each one stands.



Complete the StoaHub launch

Tabulation and ballot administration are now part of the platform that runs league and tournament registration.

DONE



Launch a new website

A modern home for potential Stoa families, alumni, partners, and community judges is built and in final preparation.

COMING JANUARY 2027



Refresh the Stoa brand

A renewed visual identity is complete and will debut alongside the new website.

COMING JANUARY 2027



Update mission, vision, and values

Renewed statements were approved by the Board and revealed to the whole league at NITOC 2026.

DONE · MAY 2026



Offer more equipping webinars

A summer series of webinars equipped club leaders and coaches for the season ahead.

DONE



Expand training resources

The new Stoa Rulebook app and Script Compliance Review put the rules and review process in every student and coach's pocket.

DONE



Grow membership, clubs, and tournaments

2025–26 became the largest season in Stoa's history.

DONE



Build alumni connections

Work continues on networking and mentoring opportunities that link former students with today's competitors.

IN PROGRESS

Strengthened *in the Faith*

*"...**strengthened** in the faith as you were taught..."*

A speech is finished in ten minutes. A debate round is over in an hour or two. What those minutes build in a young person lasts a lifetime.

A student who competes in Stoa for several seasons learns to think before speaking and to hold a conviction under pressure. She learns to research a question honestly, to listen to an opponent, and to answer with grace rather than heat. He learns to stand in front of strangers and say something true, and to walk out of a round he lost with his character intact. These are not skills the world teaches easily, and they are part of what it looks like to be strengthened in the faith as you were taught.

That is the real work of Stoa. The trophies are incidental. The formation is the point.



FAITH, STUDIED AND SPOKEN

Two events built on Scripture

Every Stoa event shapes a student. Two of them do it by sending students directly into the Word of God and then out into the world with what they found.

LIMITED PREPARATION

Apologetics

Students prepare to answer 84 published questions on the character of God, the person of Christ, the authority of Scripture, and the claims of the Christian faith. In the round, one question is drawn at random, and the student has four minutes to prepare and speak. What results is not a memorized script but a young person who has studied the faith deeply enough to explain and defend it on demand.

Approximately 1,000 students competed in Apologetics this season, from Junior competitors through high school seniors. It was the fastest-growing event in the league, and one of the two largest fields at NITOC.

"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."

1 PETER 3:15 (NIV)

LIMITED PREPARATION

Mars Hill

Named for the hill in Athens where Paul engaged the philosophers of his day, this event works the way Apologetics does. Students prepare on a published list of cultural works: novels, films, songs, paintings, and influential voices. In the round, one is drawn at random, and the student has four minutes to prepare a speech that examines it through a Biblical worldview: finding the longing and the truth within it, naming where it falls short, and speaking Truth into it with respect. It is the skill of Acts 17, practiced by teenagers.

"People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you."

ACTS 17:22-23 (NIV)

"I loved seeing the students pray with and for each other in hallways, around the tournament, and before their rounds. This is bigger than competition. It's preparation for the leaders who will shape our nation and culture for generations to come."

The people who make it possible

Formation does not happen on its own. Behind every student stand parents, club leaders, judges, and hosts who give their time so that students can grow.

Parents who coach

Most Stoa coaches are moms and dads who learned the events alongside their own children and now teach the next family in line. They run club practices, review cases and scripts, drive to tournaments, and sit through hours of rounds. Few of them ever competed themselves. They coach because they have seen what it builds.

Club leaders

They open churches and living rooms week after week, build a culture of encouragement, and carry the weight of a season so students can focus on growing.

Judges

Every round ends with a ballot. Parent judges fill most of them, round after round, tournament after tournament, often judging all day so that Stoa students can compete. Community judges from outside the league add fresh eyes. Their written feedback is how a student improves from one tournament to the next.

Tournament hosts

Local clubs hosted more than one hundred tournaments this season. Each one took months of planning, a borrowed building, and a small army of volunteers to give students a place to compete.

A CONVICTION FOR THIS MOMENT

The student must remain the author

This year a task force of coaches and leaders took up a question every educator now faces: what place artificial intelligence should have in a student's preparation. Their answer was clear. Stoa exists to form students, not to produce speeches and cases. The inventing, arranging, and delivering of one's own thoughts is the formative work at the heart of every event, and it must remain the student's own.

The position statement that followed gives families and clubs clear footing in a fast-changing landscape. Technology may change how students research. In Stoa, it will not change who does the thinking.

“Stoa exists to form students, not to produce speeches and cases.”

STOA POSITION STATEMENT ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

In their own words

From the NITOC 2026 surveys.

“One evening, a group of friends and I shared an amazing conversation over dinner about theology, predestination, Mormonism, and worship. It was a friendly, fruitful discussion, and I treasure the Stoa community for bringing together and developing people who want to use their skills to glorify the Lord.”

Stoa student · Tennessee

“As parents, we have witnessed such significant growth and transformation through our years in Stoa. God is good, and we truly see His work here.”

Stoa parent · California

“Each year, I find myself so encouraged by the next generation. Hearing them speak and seeing how they are developing critical thinking skills is delightful.”

Community judge · NITOC 2026

Overflowing *with Thankfulness*

“...and overflowing with thankfulness.”

Stoa runs on servant leadership. Hundreds of volunteers coach, judge, host, pray, and serve on committees so that students can grow.

To every parent who drove to a tournament, every judge who wrote a thoughtful ballot, every club leader who did the heavy lifting of administering and leading a club, and every committee member who served behind the scenes: thank you. You are the reason Stoa is thriving.



“They really do try to make God the center, not just on paper, but experientially as well. When I go home, it’s always with a deeper awareness of how much I love this organization, what it stands for, and what it cultivates in its members.”

Stoa parent · North Carolina

Committees

Served during the 2025–26 season.

Alumni

Elizabeth Stapleton and Samuel Durand

Communications

JoAnn Pattara

Debate

Peter Fear

Marketing

DeEtte Sprimont

NITOC Planning

Trish Youmans

Speech

Allisha Speed

Training and Development

Ellen Alcazar

Work teams

StoaHub Support

Mike Diaz

StoaHub Development

JD Huntington

Board of Directors

Serving during the 2025–26 season.



Janice Tham

President



Theresa Ellington

Board member



Danny Hinton

Board member



Kimberly Farley

Secretary



Wayne Johnson

Board member



Josh Baker

Treasurer



Josh Mauldin

Board member

Senior Leadership



Lynda Sloneker

Executive Director



Becky Kirkman

Associate Director

Administrative Support

Victoria Baker

Administrative Assistant

Katie Sellers

Administrative Assistant

With gratitude to our sponsors

Ministry partners whose generosity kept Stoa accessible to families in the 2025–26 season.

LIFETIME

Union University

PLATINUM

Grove City College

Patrick Henry College

GOLD

Classical Conversations

CLT

Concordia University Irvine

Dallas Baptist University

Harding University

Monument Publishing

Regent University

SILVER

Calvin Coolidge Presidential Foundation

Cedarville Forensics

NIHD

Find Your Christian College

Oklahoma Baptist University

BRONZE

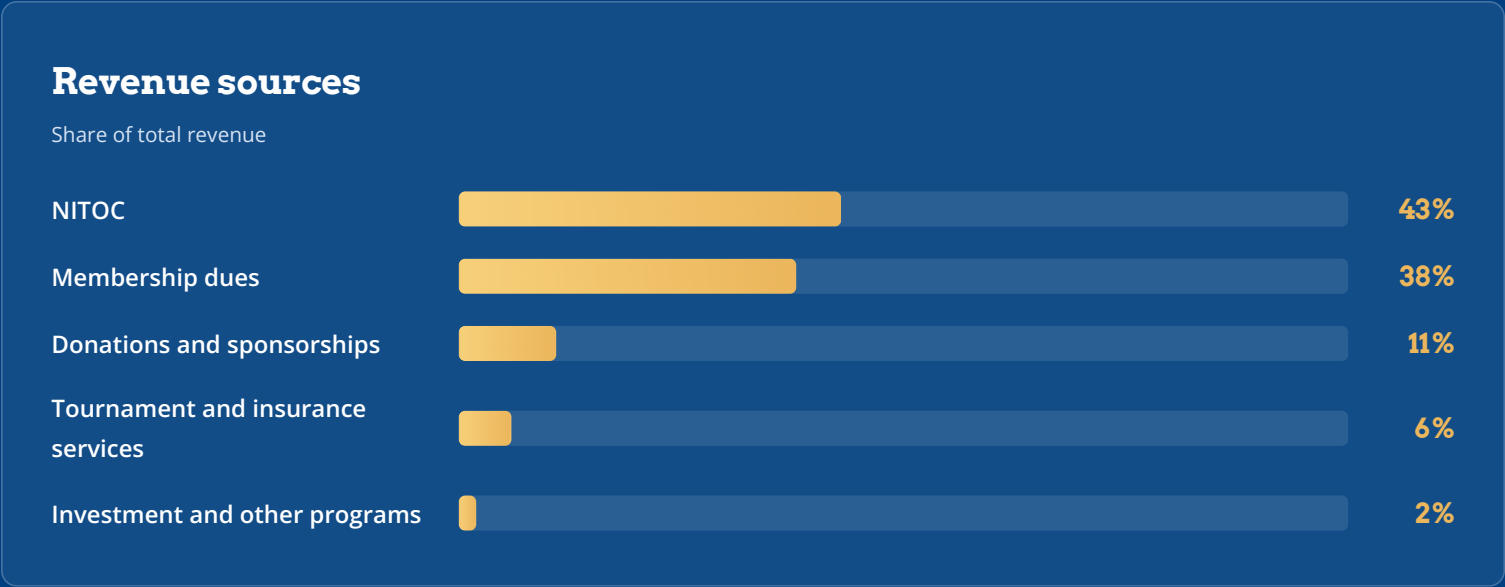
Homeschool Records

Faithful Stewardship

“We steward our time, talent, and finances with integrity and sustainability, ensuring the faithful advancement of the mission for future generations.” One of Stoa’s six values, and the standard for every dollar entrusted to the league.

FISCAL YEAR ENDED JULY 31, 2026

TOTAL REVENUE	TOTAL EXPENSES	OPERATING SURPLUS	YEAR-END NET ASSETS
\$387K	\$365K	\$22K	\$384K



Looking ahead

What Stoa is building next.

Students and recognition

A national honor society

Recognizing students for sustained excellence, character, and service in speech and debate.

Expanded Junior resources and support

New materials and guidance to welcome our youngest competitors and their families from the very first season.

An alumni internship program

Inviting Stoa graduates back to serve the league that shaped them, with real responsibility in areas like digital marketing, communications, and league operations, and real experience to carry into their next chapter.

Tools and technology

A Stoa app

League news, announcements, training materials, and resources for students, parents, coaches, and judges, all in one place on every phone.

Easier tournament setup

A guided assistant that walks tournament directors through StoaHub setup step by step.

StoaHub and Script Compliance Review improvements

Continued refinement of the tools clubs and coaches use every week.

Online debate ballots for in-person tournaments

Faster tabulation and clearer, more legible feedback for students.

Training and safety

Improved training resources

Equipping coaches, club leaders, and judges with clear, current materials they can use right away.

Advanced Judge Orientation resources

Deeper preparation so every ballot helps a student grow.

MinistrySafe implementation

IN PROGRESS

Strengthening child-safety training and standards across the league.

Voice and community

Speak Boldly! The Stoa podcast

LAUNCHED

Conversations for families and coaches, with more episodes on the way.

StoaTalks

Student speeches recorded and shared on YouTube. Great speeches deserve a bigger audience.

Stoa merchandise

Campaigns through the year, including a spring release with the new logo and look.

"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness."

COLOSSIANS 2:6-7 (NIV)

OUR MISSION AND VISION

We equip homeschool students, through competitive speech and debate, to think critically, engage graciously, and speak boldly from a Biblical worldview.

Until generations of faithful and compelling communicators make Jesus Christ known in every sphere.

Join the Stoa community

Whether you are a homeschool family looking for a place where your students can learn to speak boldly, a potential sponsor, or a friend who shares our vision, we would love to connect with you.

[Visit StoaUSA.org](https://StoaUSA.org)

[Find a club near you](#)



SCAN TO VISIT