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EDITOR'S PICK **ALERT**

Dickinson College

Dickinson College seminar a lesson in freedom, college prep

Tammie Gitt The Sentinel

Jul 30, 2021



Lea Quigley, right, presents one of the arguments in favor of Abraham Lincoln's approach to ending slavery during the Lincoln Douglass Debate at Dickinson College, Friday morning, July 30, 2021.

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debate in Dickinson College's Stern Hall Friday examined the approaches of Frederick

A Douglass and Abraham Lincoln in their quest to defeat slavery in America. The judges awarded Team Lincoln the win, but the 10 students who presented the debate in the culminating event of a three-week seminar hosted by the college's House Divided Project can all claim victory in the long run.

"The students from this area really demonstrated how talented and hard working they are," said Matthew Pinsker, professor of history at Dickinson, where he holds the Pohanka chair in American Civil War History and directs the House Divided Project.

The college-level seminar explored the historic struggle for freedom in the United States. It's part of the Knowledge for Freedom program, an initiative from the Teagle Foundation that helps introduce students to a series of texts addressing fundamental questions about freedom, democracy and self-government.

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Pinsker called the seminar, which was offered free of charge to the students, a big success.

“The students put in so much effort. You could see it in the debate,” he said. “The effort level was just extraordinary and that’s what makes it. If the students put in the effort, everything is good.”

Four Cumberland County students attended the program with another five coming from Lancaster and York counties. One student from Delaware heard about the program during a campus visit in the spring and decided to apply.

Camera Bailey, a senior at Cumberland Valley High School, said she applied to the program because it made the possibility of experiencing college so much easier, especially since it was at the school she wants to attend.

“It was a great opportunity,” she said.

Lea Quigley, a Mechanicsburg High School senior, thought the program would be a good opportunity to see what college was about.

Quigley said a typical day began with a seminar in the morning followed by a class discussion in the afternoon that could focus on what had been presented in the seminar or other topics such as writing skills. That was followed by either another class period or an activity.

In addition to the class work, the students took field trips to Gettysburg, Harrisburg's National Civil War Museum and The Gathering monument, and visits to Lincoln's Cottage and the national African-American Museum in Washington DC.



Exhibit delves into Dickinson College's complicated history with slavery

Tammie Gitt The Sentinel

“It’s a really great experience. I really enjoyed being here. I 10 out of 10 recommend and I 10 out of 10 would definitely come again if I could,” she said.

She said the program taught her that it was important to pay attention even if the classes seemed long. For example, she said she would not have known what she needed to know for the debate if she had not listened to Pinsker.

“When the professors are talking, they are giving you everything you need for your assignments,” Quigley said.

The education extended beyond the classroom itself, helping the students become accustomed to the nuances of college life. For example, Pinsker “preached every day” that arriving to class five minutes early is considered on time but getting there at the scheduled start time is late, Bailey said.

The students came from different walks of life, making the program even more interesting to Boiling Springs senior Ajla Salkic, a Bosnian Muslim whose parents were refugees.

“I really enjoyed the opportunity to get to know other people that I otherwise wouldn’t have made connections with,” she said. “I thought it was interesting to get different viewpoints on the same topic.”

One of the components of the program is the continued connection between the students and Dickinson College during the college admissions process, Pinsker said.



Dickinson College to rename building, campus gateway for former slaves

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“We’ve also had admissions workshops that have been so helpful in our college admissions process so far, and that’s something that I’m also truly grateful for,” Bailey said.

Salkjic said she has been to field hockey camps that included a few talks about the admissions process, but nothing was as in-depth as what was offered at Dickinson College this summer when representatives from the admissions office came in every Tuesday to talk to the students about topics like financial aid, college essays and applying for scholarships.

The information is invaluable to Salkic, who said she will be the first in her family to attend college.

“Nobody really has that experience for me to go and talk to so I really value that information,” she said.

Yareliz Cordero-Rodriguez, a Cumberland Valley student who will also be a first generation college student, said the program gave her an idea of what college will be like and offered insight that she didn’t know previously and that her family couldn’t provide.

The program also instilled in her a new confidence thanks to the work of their advisors Becca Stout and Cooper Wingert as well as Pinsker’s constructive criticism of her work that inspired her to present herself with more certainty.



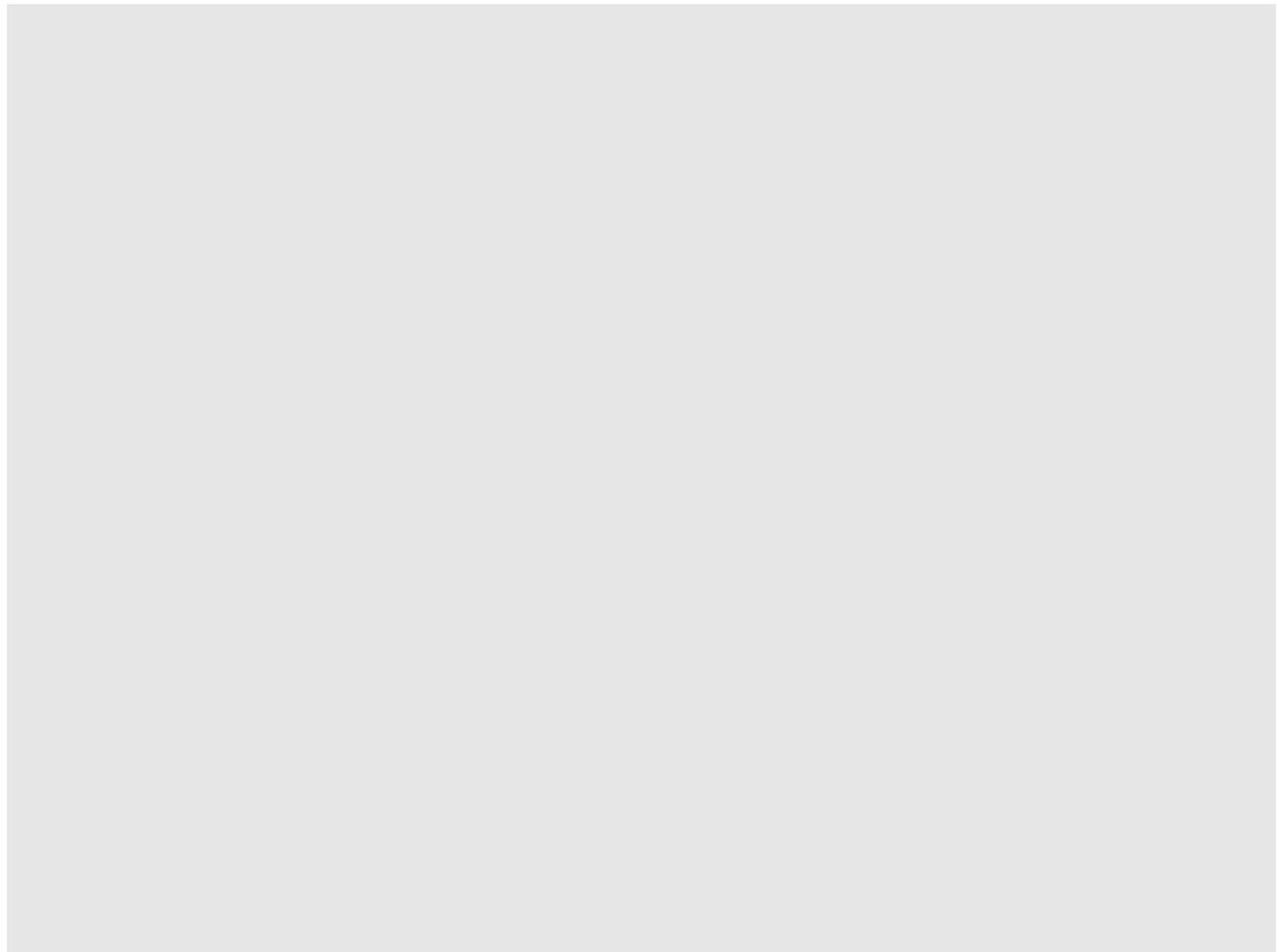
Dickinson College unveils walk exploring slavery and freedom on campus

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“I was really doubting myself, but being here I know that I can do it now. I’m 100% sure I can do it and I am going to do amazing while I’m at college. I’m just so confident,” she said.

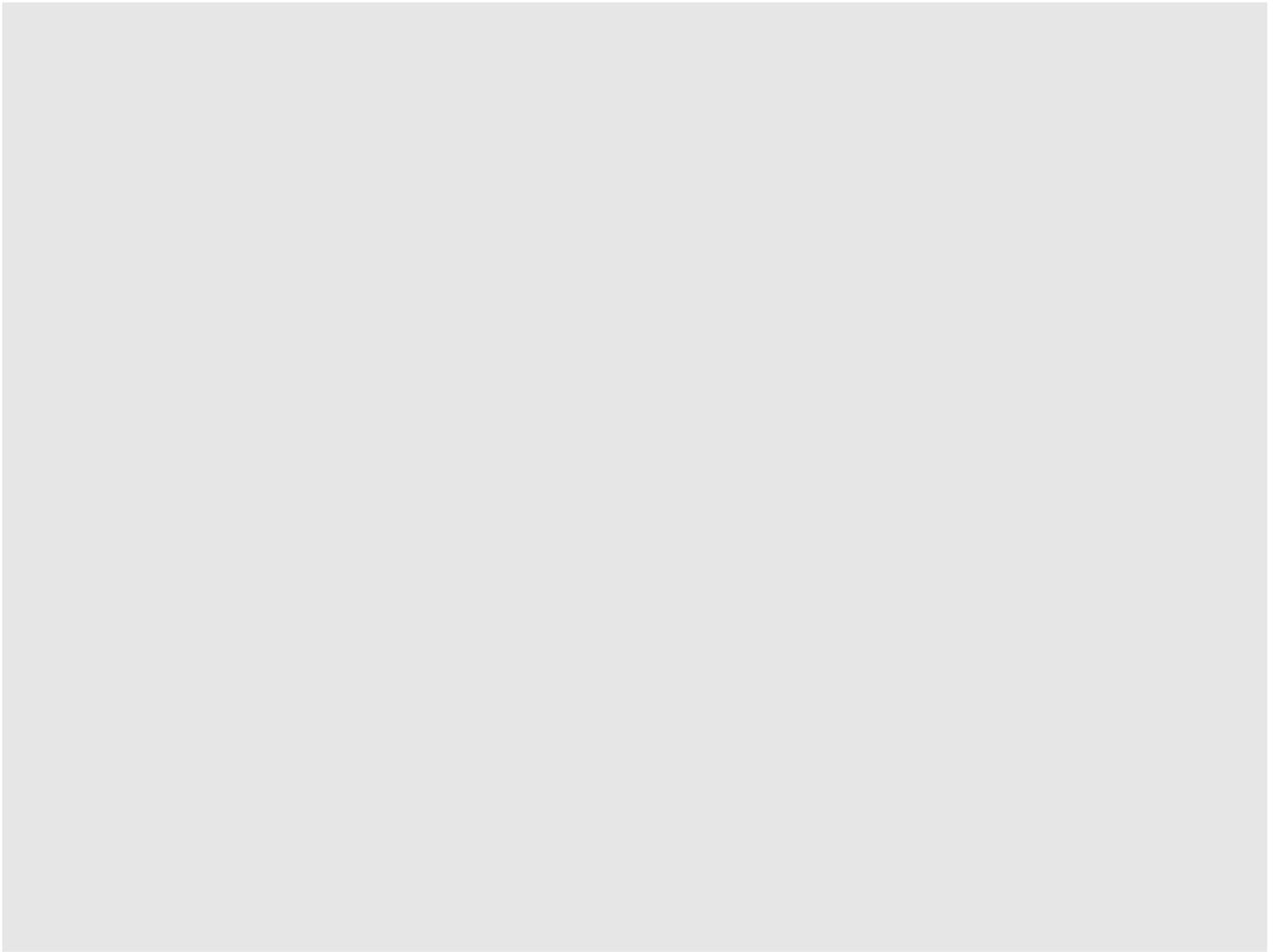
That change in perspective is one of the goals of the program.

“It’s about leveling the playing field to give people reassurance that they’re college ready. All 10 of these kids are college ready and there’s not one of them that couldn’t survive in college,” Pinsker said.



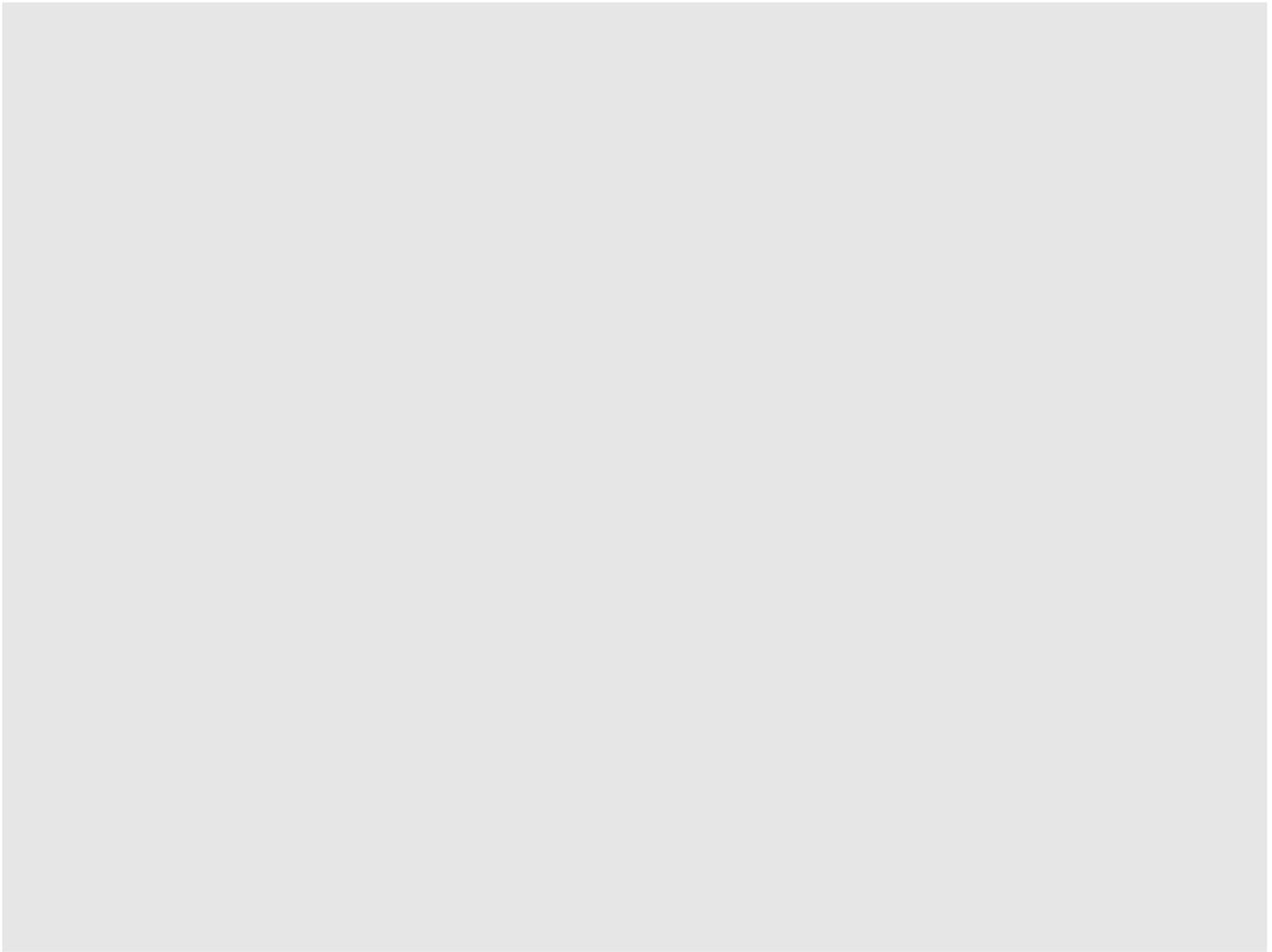
Ajla Sakic, left, makes a point during her presentation arguing for Frederick Douglass's approach to ending slavery during the Lincoln Douglass Debate at Dickinson College, Friday morning, July 30, 2021.

Jason Malmont, The Sentinel



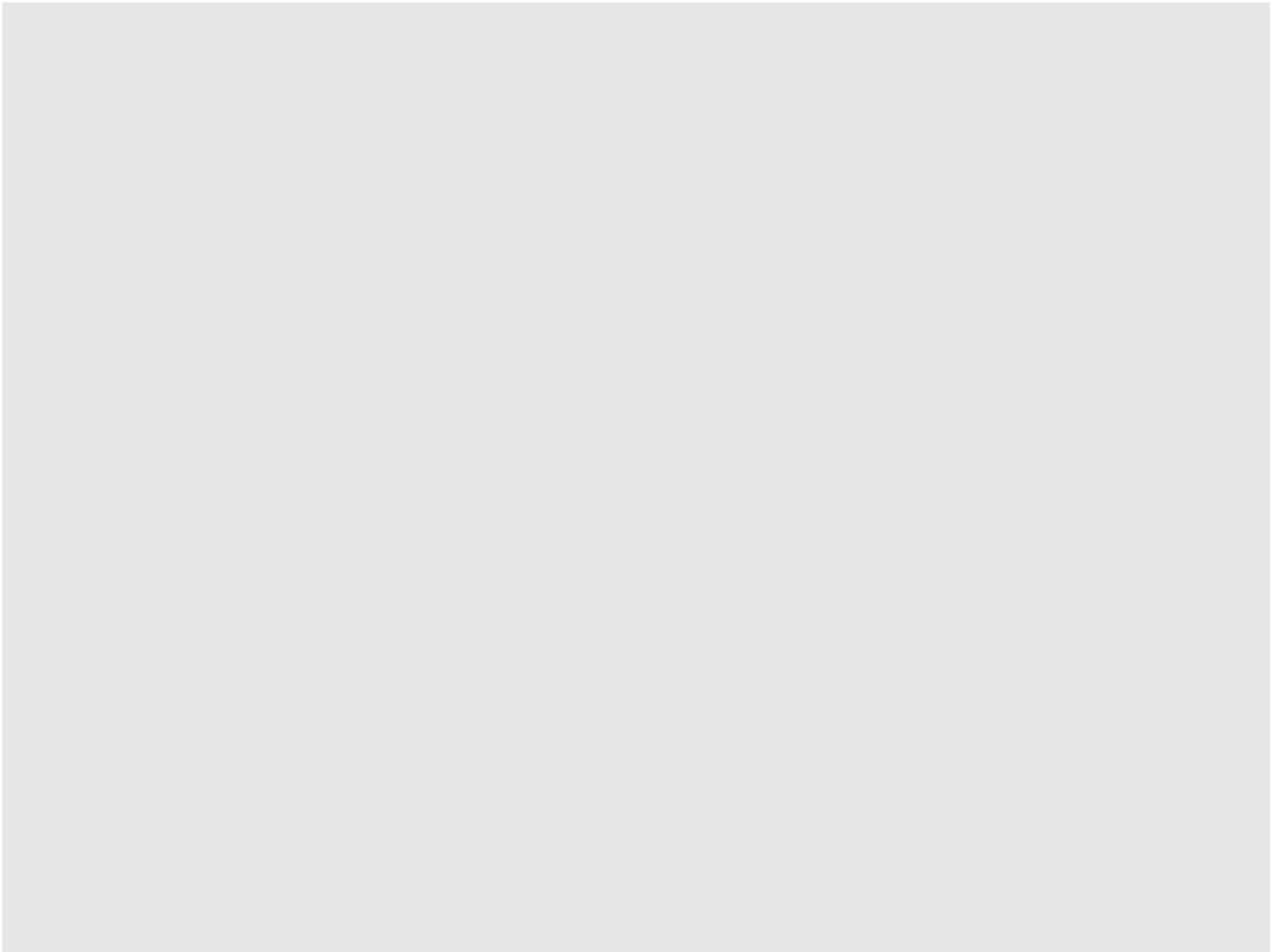
Camera Bailey, left, presents one of the arguments in favor of Abraham Lincoln's approach to ending slavery during the Lincoln Douglass Debate at Dickinson College, Friday morning, July 30, 2021.

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Prof. Matthew Pinsker discusses the Battle of Gettysburg with Knowledge for Freedom students at the Gettysburg National Military Park.

Dickinson College photo



The Dickinson College Knowledge for Freedom group at the Gettysburg National Military Park Visitor Center.

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