

POLICY CAUCUS WORKING GROUP ON TENURE FOR FORENSIC EDUCATORS: INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

On May 21-23, the Policy Caucus Working Group on Professional Development met at the Quail Roost Conference Center in Quail Roost, North Carolina. The goal of the Working Group was to produce a draft of a document on tenure for forensic educators which, after being circulated as widely as possible throughout the forensics community, could eventually receive the support of professional organizations representing forensic educators. The draft is attached to this paper. Our hope is that the attached document can eventually be provided to departments interested in hiring forensic educators in tenure track lines in order to bring the process of evaluating for tenure more in line with the role played by the coach. Several concerns emerged in the group's discussions, and are mentioned here in order to place the document in context.

First and foremost, for any such document to be of use it must be adaptable. Debate programs come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes and are attached to a wide variety of institutions with a correspondingly wide variety of expectations for tenure. A document prepared with only one type of program or host institution in mind does more harm than good.

That having been said, three considerations, stemming from conversations between active forensic educators, both tenured and untenured, and former directors, several of whom are currently departmental and institutional administrators, guided the development of the attached document.

1. The importance of mission statements. It became clear in our discussion that the expectations of a particular department, college or university go beyond the traditional classifications or categories of institutions. Based on the needs of the institution and the institutional and departmental mission statements, the department and the forensic educator should agree on an explicit mission statement for the forensic educator should agree on an explicit mission statement for the forensic program. This process should take place well before a tenure review is to be initiated. The size of the program, emphasis on competition vs. on campus events, the standards by which the institution will assess what a "quality" program is, should be clearly laid out well in advance. Does the institution want a few students prepared to travel and compete at a national level, a large number of students prepared to travel and compete at a national level, a large number of students prepared to travel and compete regionally, or a mix? This may help determine whether, for tenure purposes, forensics activities will be evaluated as primarily research, service or teaching, as well as the effect coaching will have on the other categories.

2. Outcome standards for teaching performance. For years forensic educators have discussed the difficulties inherent in using standard methods for evaluating teaching performance. Because the standard methods involve student ratings, there is automatically a problem given the relatively small size of most squads, not to mention a problem in protecting anonymity. It was the strong feeling of the Working Group that colleges and universities will increasingly be called on to evaluate teaching, not in terms of students likes and dislikes, but in terms of what students can be demonstrated to have learned. Given that such standards are likely to be increasingly prominent, the difficulty in standard measures, and the potential to be explored in modifying such standards for use with debate (and presumably IE) the Working Group strongly urges the adoption of this type of standard by the forensic community. The quality of a coach's effort could be assessed by examining such things as four year graduation rate, improvement in competitive success over the duration of a student's career, or for that matter a coach's, number of students involved in activity, overall squad GPA, acceptance and success rate of students in major graduate programs.

3. Tenure standards should distinguish between *scholarship* and *scholarly activity*. There has been, in some quarters, much recent debate over the appropriate placement of forensics activities in the standard tenure evaluation classification of teaching, service and research. We suggest that this debate may eventually be irrelevant, as the classification should ultimately be determined through discussion between the coach and the department, taking into consideration the specific circumstances, the nature of the host institution, and the mission statements of the program, department, and college or university. We suggest instead the adoption of an understanding that in each of the three categories the professional's activities may be scholarly or not, and that scholarly activity in any of the three categories should be weighed more heavily than non-scholarly activity. As an example, if a scholar's primary research interest is in feminist critical theory, then participation on the curriculum committee considering the need for building more dorm space would be non-scholarly activity. Publishing might or might not be scholarly, depending on the nature of the individual's research program and the specifics of a particular piece. Some publishing, in fact, might most appropriately be categorized and evaluated as service of a scholarly nature. This allows a holistic and contextualized consideration of a professional life, and means that for some, for whom coaching is not considered scholarship per se, the candidate for tenure can still receive all due credit for the differences between coaching and other activities normally undertaken by junior faculty.

The following document results from the consideration of these factors. It is intended as a jumping off point for discussion and debate, and we look forward to the reactions of our colleagues in the forensics community.

Respectfully, The Policy Caucus Working Group on Tenure and Professional Development.

DRAFT DOCUMENT

REPORT OF THE WORKING COMMITTEE FROM THE QUAIL ROOST CONFERENCE ON ASSESSMENT OF PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES OF DIRECTORS OF DEBATE

**SPONSORED BY THE AFA POLICY DEBATE CAUCUS, QUAIL ROOST CONFERENCE CENTER,
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Introduction

A well established and supported debate program offers exceptional opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate education that are equaled by few other academic programs. Debate permits undergraduates to develop such humanistic capabilities as research, analysis, critical evaluation of claims, and the construction and judgment of argument on important social issues. Debate introduces the intellectual excitement and rigor of research into the undergraduate curriculum in a manner characterized by both its intensity and interdisciplinary nature. Graduate students benefit by being able to pursue an advanced degree while obtaining the professional development as directors of debate that is so necessary to train future generations of students. The benefits derived from debate thus seem particularly appropriate for, and consistent with, the emerging concerns and trends in higher education.

Purpose

This document emerged from a three day conference attended by active directors of policy debate and university administrators. It offers, we believe, a perspective from which directors and debate programs can be evaluated. The conclusions presented here may be particularly valuable in addressing standards for promotion and tenure decisions. It is imperative to note that debate is viewed as a valuable professional activity that occurs within a complete professional life defined by individuals in conjunction with the educational missions of their institutions and departments.

Perspective

In generating possible criteria for evaluation, three fundamental principles guided the Working Committee's deliberations:

1. The director of debate's role, and basis for evaluation, should be grounded explicitly in the mission statements of the institution, department and debate program. The debate program's mission statement should be developed by the director and the appropriate departmental administrative officer or committee, and should identify the ways in which the debate program can complement and help accomplish the department's mission.
2. The director of debate's professional life should be characterized by excellence in all of its aspects. Assessments of such excellence should be focused less on the existence of discrete accomplishments, and more on the integration of research, teaching, and service into a coherent and mutually supportive totality. The specific emphasis devoted to each aspect of professional life shall be guided by mission statements of the institution, department, and debate program. It should be remembered in this context, however, that the director

is a professional who coaches, not a coach who is simply housed in an academic department as a matter of convenience.

Within the context of each institution and department, a distinction is made between work that qualifies as scholarly and work that does not. In each of the three traditional areas of evaluation, research, teaching, and service, activities may or may not be scholarly. In general, in each of the three areas, work is considered scholarly if it meets the following criteria:

---- The work serves as a contribution to knowledge by, for example, (a) advancing understanding and/or information, (b) developing interpretive and critical perspectives, (c) integrating information so as to bring new insights to bear on it, or (d) applying new information and critical perspectives.

---- The work contributes to the individual's personal-professional development by, for example, representing work in a new area for her or him, or work that is part of an integrated, evolving, and progressing program.

---- The work is communicated to knowledgeable others so they can engage it, challenge it, adopt it, teach it, and write about it.

The perspective presented here therefore retains the traditional categories of academic life (research, teaching, and service) but places them within a framework recognizing the changing complexities and opportunities that increasingly characterize higher education.

3. The director of debate's professional life should be evaluated on the basis of clearly identifiable and measurable outcomes that are desirable and appropriate for the department and institution within which the director serves.

From this perspective, activities associated with one's performance as director of debate are part of an overall professional life. Serving as director of debate is a faculty assignment appropriate to an intellectual discipline -- predominately that of communication studies -- within a given institution and department. For an individual serving at a research institution, she or he may still be expected to engage in an active research program. At the same time, however, evaluation of that research program, in addition to teaching and service, should consider the totality of one's professional life within an institution and field. Within this perspective, for instance, research activities would be complemented by related, integrated teaching and service activities. Activities in each area gain in value proportionately to the extent they are consistent with the demands imposed by, and the resources committed to, fulfillment of the respective mission statements.

Activities and Outcomes

Evaluation of a director of debate's professional life should be measured in concrete terms consistent with the articulated goals of the program's mission statement. The weighting allocated to research, teaching, and service may vary, depending on the needs of the institution. Similarly, it is not our expectation that the director would be evaluated, whether for promotion or for tenure based solely on her or his work as director. However, to the extent that coaching is part of a coherent professional life, there are elements of the director's activities which may best be evaluated as research, as teaching, or as service. Furthermore, while the director ought to be held to standards of excellence in each area of activity, his or her position as director creates a context in which the evaluation of the director's performance in all activities should occur. The following identifies possibilities for making such evaluations:

1. Research

While individual research programs will vary, certain aspects of a director of debate's activities appropriately fit within the category of research, depending upon the standards and mission statement of each department and institution.

---- Each director of debate should clearly identify her or his research program. Each research program should contain an emerging center or focus. It seems appropriate, given the concerns expressed with creating an integrated professional life across research, teaching, and service, that a reasonable concentration for such a research program might include forensic pedagogy.

---- Each director should, in accordance with the appropriate departmental administrator or committee, identify those quality measures for assessing the research program. These measures should then be utilized in an evaluation of the director's research program by his or her peers, both within and external to the department.

---- The degree of emphasis on research must be related to the institutional, departmental and programmatic mission statements.

---- Each institution and department should accept that the research efforts of a director should be placed within the broader context of overall mission statements. Further, in those institutions where a research program of substantial importance is required, appropriate amounts of administrative support should be provided such that the director might have reasonable expectations of fulfilling the research component. The requisite administrative support for such a research program might consist of released time from teaching courses other than debate, the providing of research assistants, and so forth.

---- In consideration of the value of publications resulting from a research program, the sources of publication should be evaluated in terms of their prominence within the research program's area of concentration. By this standard, for instance, *Argumentation and Advocacy* should be recognized as among the leading outlets for research in argumentation studies and in forensic pedagogy.

a. Activities within Research

Among the activities that might constitute a research program are the following:

i. Research in debate theory, practice, and pedagogy.

ii. Debate coaching when viewed as performance. This perspective sees debate as a creative activity, somewhat along the lines of other artistic and performance-based research programs within the academy. The assumption expressed by those attending this conference, however, is that even a performance-centered debate program will still have some written component in order to qualify as scholarly research.

b. Measurable Outcomes.

The most obvious measurable outcomes for assessing the quality of a director's research program will remain publication of articles in appropriate regional, national, and international journals, and presentation of papers at conventions.

2. *Teaching*

Two primary dimensions of teaching are inherent within directing debate: (a) the act of teaching, typically associated with coaching and training students; and (b) the development of pedagogical works, such as handbooks, model syllabi, debate materials, and audio-visual aids conceived for pedagogical purposes and shared with knowledgeable colleagues. It is possible that, depending upon the way an individual program is characterized, the latter category of pedagogical works could be contained as research.

One very strong implication of this view is that debate should not be considered as an extra-curricular activity, but at the very least as co-curricular.

a. Activities within Teaching

Among the activities that might constitute teaching are the following:

- i. Mentoring graduate students;
- ii. judging and critiquing debates;
- iii. critical thinking instruction;
- iv. coaching debate teams and individual debaters;
- v. writing textbooks for debate pedagogy;
- vi. writing handbooks.

One final point that should be emphasized about teaching in debate is the necessity to become familiar with, and to gain knowledge in many different fields and research methods in order to become conversant with the debate topic and to teach students effectively.

b. Measurable Outcomes

A number of measurable outcomes are possible when discussing a director's teaching accomplishments.

- i. Peer reviews can be obtained from other directors who observe the teaching and other professional conduct of directors of debate while in the performance of those activities. Such reviews can be solicited by the appropriate administrator or committee, and can be added to the portfolio;
- ii. graduate rates of debaters within the program;
- iii. composite grade or quality point average for debaters in the program;

- iv. acceptance and attendance of debaters in the program to graduate and professional schools;
- v. overall win-loss record for the program, not as an absolute measure, but as changing win-loss records over the course of individual debater's careers reflect evidence that students are growing and developing;
- vi. achievement of the debate program against particular levels of competition;
- vii. rankings in the NDT or other point systems;
- viii. the number of participants in the debate program;
- ix. continued recruitment of stronger and more capable students to the debate program;
- x. measures of student satisfaction, including but not limited to student evaluation;
- xi. letters from former debaters;
- xii. exit interviews by the appropriate administrator or committee with graduating debaters and graduate assistants.

This listing is intended to be illustrative only, and not to exclude other appropriate measures of successful teaching activity.

3. Service

A commitment to professional service is also to be expected of each director of debate. At the same time, one should recognize that the opportunities for such professional service at the regional and national level for directors of debate, frequently as junior level and non-tenured faculty, are perhaps unique within the academy.

As a rule, highly visible and, hence, highly demanding and time-consuming, professional service is often limited to senior faculty who have established the credentials and respect of their peers over a number of years. Development of those credentials usually begins during the initial academic appointment, although to some extent while pursuing the doctoral degree. For directors of debate, however, the process begins much earlier. The professional "introduction" to one's colleagues frequently occurs while undergraduate debaters; is strengthened as a graduate students traveling with debate teams and judging; and often enters as a fully accepted colleague with the first appointment as an Assistant Professor. It is not at all unusual for a junior faculty member to serve in positions of regional and national responsibility, whether as a member of a district or national debate committee or as actively involved in such professional associations as the AFA, ADA and others. Assuming competence, directors of debate may attain positions of substantial professional service while at a relatively young professional age. The net consequence of such circumstances is that many directors are completing their professional service to the forensic community at the time when colleagues are just beginning theirs.

As a result of these possibilities a kind of "reverse" presumption can be expected wherein directors of debate will have substantial professional service and leadership early in one's career. To the extent that the relative

weightings of research, teaching and service must be interpreted within a coherent totality of professional life, administrators or committees evaluating directors must consider the time commitments expended and the effect of that commitment on teaching and research activities.

a. Activities

Among the activities which are appropriate for a director of debate's professional service are the following:

- i. hosting workshops for high school and college students and teachers;
- ii. hosting tournaments for high school and colleges;
- iii. service to the forensic profession and to professional organizations;
- iv. hosting clinics to improve forensic pedagogy.

b. Measurable Outcomes.

The following are examples of measurable outcomes for professional service.

- i. numbers of workshops, tournaments, and clinics hosted;
- ii. evaluations by participants at workshops, tournaments, and clinics where such evaluations are appropriate;
- iii. positions held and responsibilities accomplished in service to the profession and professional associations;
- iv. and by peer review.

It should be noted that positions of professional and association leadership and service constitute unusually good indications of peer evaluation. Given the relatively small size of the debate community, one's peers are well aware of an individual's abilities and the process of evaluation is continual. The nature of debate as explained at the beginning of this section means that colleagues are usually known for relatively long periods of time, and that appointment or election to positions of professional responsibility is testament by the community to an individual director of debate.

4. Administration

An essential part of any director of debate's duties is that of careful, diligent, and professional administration of the program and the funds allocated to it.

a. Activities

Among the activities that must be performed by every director in an administrative capacity are the following:

- i. Supervision of students and others while traveling to tournaments and other activities;

- ii. timely preparation of all arrangements for travel;
- iii. timely preparation and disposition of all relevant documents relating to travel, personnel, and financial matters.

5. Promotion and Tenure Document

While each institution and department has its own procedures and requirements for tenure and promotion and for the documentation supporting that process, this Conference recommends that each director be given the opportunity to prepare a three to five page narrative that presents his or her professional life in a succinct manner. Included within his or her document would be a statement of all the program's activities, the successes achieved, and how the various elements of teaching, research and service cohere into a professional life.

Concluding Comments

Differences will inevitably exist among debate programs and in the ways in which directors of debate create and administer successful programs. What seems most essential is that each director, working in conjunction with the appropriate departmental administrator or committee, work to establish a program mission statement. That mission statement should be the statement of guiding principle for the program, and for the director, expressing the philosophy supporting the program and influencing the daily decisions necessary for the program's survival and prosperity. While we recognize that many different outcomes can be associated with a "successful" program, we believe that, taken in combination, the criteria suggested here will increase the likelihood that directors are aware of the standards by which their work in forensics will be evaluated, and can even have some input into those standards.

The life, both personal and professional, of a director of debate is demanding and challenging. Yet, it is inordinately rewarding at the same time. When most think of the rewards directly linked to directing, however, it is the contact with one's colleagues and students which rush to mind most quickly. Other rewards, too, can be associated with one's professional life as a director of debate, and those should include promotion and tenure, and merit increases when they are justified. This Conference offers this document as a point from which discussion and evaluation may continue.

Respectfully submitted,

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