Reimagining the Future of Intercollegiate Debate

Pedagogy, Practice, and Sustainability

Edited by Kelly Michael Young and David Cram Helwich

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Fourth National Debate Development Conference

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Cover design by Tracy Cox.

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Since the hosting of the third National Debate Development Conference at Wake Forest University in 2009, several notable directors of debate and forensics have passed away. This book is dedicated to those directors who worked tirelessly in their service as debate educators.

Dr. Craig Cutbirth (73, 1948–2022). Director of forensics and graduate studies at Illinois State University. Prior to ISU, he taught and coached debate at the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh and Bradley University. He was an instructor at many speech and debate workshops around the country. He was a respected and published scholar in political communication and communication criticism, with two textbooks and essays in several journals.

Dr. Joseph W. Wenzel (88, 1933–2022). Emeritus professor and director of debate at University of Illinois. He also founded a debate program at Hunter College (NY) before joining Illinois. He was an active argumentation scholar, receiving scholarly awards from the AFA and Midwest Forensic Association. At Illinois, he served as associate department head and director of graduate studies. He also coached the undergraduate mock trial team late in his career.

Dr. Charles Willard (76, 1945–2021). Highly successful director of forensics at Dartmouth College (1974–1982). He also taught at Slippery Rock State College (PA), the University of Pittsburg, and the University of Louisville, where he was a long-serving department chair. He was a highly published and foundational argumentation theorist, who helped found the AFA-NCA Alta Argumentation Conference and the International Society for the Study of Argumentation conference. In 1999, he received an AFA Golden Anniversary Outstanding Contribution to Scholarship award, just one of the many awards he earned in his long career.

Dr. Nick Burnett (65, 1956–2021). Director of debate from 1987 to 1996, emeritus professor of communication studies and emeritus associate dean, Sacramento State University. His teams won many regional and national awards, reaching quarterfinals at CEDA Nationals in 1988 and 1989. After coaching for ten years, he moved on to chair the communication studies department for five years, then retired as associate dean for the College of Arts and Letters in 2012. He was an active member of the AFA, CEDA, and NCA.

Gary Horn (81, 1919–2021). Taught communication courses and debate at both the high school and college level for over 40 years. He was an instructor and coach at Southwestern College (Mooreland, OK) from 1974 to 1985 and Ferris State University (Big Rapids, MI) from 1985 to 2005. He coached several national champion teams. He was president of Pi Kappa Delta (1985–1987) and recipient of the organization's E. R. Nichols Award for outstanding contributions to the forensics discipline. In 2005, he was inducted into the PKD Hall of Fame and, in 2012, to the Kansas Speech Communication Association Collegiate Hall of Fame. In 1994, he cofounded the National Educational Debate Association (NEDA).

Dr. Donal Stanton (80, 1941–2021). Prominent coach and professor at Southwest Missouri State (now Missouri State University). In his seven years as director, Stanton qualified teams to the NDT each year, with teams in the elimination rounds in three consecutive years. In 1973, his team reached the semifinals of the NDT. In 1974 and 1974, his teams reached octofinals. Outside of debate, Dr. Stanton was a gifted educator, winning numerous awards for his instruction. He earned his doctorate in 1972 from Ohio State University.

Dr. Larry Richardson (86, 1935–2021). Successful and longtime director of forensics at Western Washington University. He joined the faculty in 1970, after serving as a debate coach and band director at the high school level. He provided a great deal of service to the intercollegiate debate community, with leadership roles in the NDT, CEDA, Pi Kappa Delta, AFA-NIET, and NCA. He also was a noted scholar in debate theory and the rhetoric of the civil rights movement.

Dr. Lee Polk (79, 1941–2021). A debate legend in both high school and intercollegiate debate communities. Polk became the director of forensics and debate at Baylor University in 1970, leading a team to an NDT championship in 1975. As director of the Baylor high school debate institute, he oversaw the training of thousands of students. He coauthored and founded the famous *Baylor Briefs*, which was one of the most popular high school debate handbooks. In 1978, Polk become chair of the Baylor Department of Communication, retiring in 2003.

Rodger Biles (67, 1953–2021). Longtime assistant director of debate at Emporia State University. Led ESU to a CEDA national championship in 1993. Prior to coming to ESU, he was head debate coach at Southeastern Oklahoma State University and University of Texas–Arlington. He later transitioned into a career in information technology.

Dr. Steven B. Hunt (74, 1946–2021). Professor emeritus of communication and director of forensics at Lewis & Clark from 1973 to 2009. He was past president of CEDA and editor of Pi Kappa Delta's *The Forensic*. He earned his PhD from the University of Kansas and JD from Northwestern School of Law. He enjoyed a long career as a coach, training several nationally competitive teams.

Dr. Geoffrey Klinger (54, 1966–2021). Professor of communication and director of forensics at DePauw University (2003–2021). Debating as an undergraduate at DePauw, he later received his PhD from the University of Iowa in 1998. He then taught and directed at St. Johns, Hanover College, and the University of Utah.

Dr. James Roper (82, 1938–2020). Professor of philosophy and the first and longest-serving director of debate at Michigan State University (1984–2000). He led the team to the octofinals of the 1988 CEDA National Championship. His teams later finished in second place in 1994, 1997, and 2000 and won a CEDA National Sweepstakes Points Championship in 1996. In 1998, his team reached the semifinals of the NDT and finals in 2000. He founded the Spartan Debate Institute in 1992.

Dr. Thomas F. Freeman (100, 1919–2020). Coached debate for 64 years (1949–2013) at Texas Southern University, a historically Black university in Houston, Texas. He led a highly successful team with over 2,000 awards, and his former students include Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Barbara Jordan, the gospel star Yolanda Adams, and generations of Texas public officials. He ran a debate boot camp for Denzel Washington and the rest of the cast of the 2007 movie *The Great Debaters*.

Tony Allison (73, 1947–2020). Taught for more than 40 years and coached speech and debate for 21 years at Cameron University (OK). He was the department chair from 1983 to 2013. As a coach, he led his teams to two national championships and several state championships. He served as the director of Cameron's summer speech and debate camp. He was inducted in Pi Kappa Delta's Coaches Hall of Fame in 2005.

Dr. Martin "Marty" Feeney (71, 1948–2020). Enjoyed a long coaching and teaching career, teaching at Monmouth College (IL), Central College (IA), and Simpson College (IA). He was an associate professor of communication at Central from 1986 to 2007. He served in the US Navy during the Vietnam War. After his military service, he earned a master's and doctorate degree at Bowling Green State University (OH).

Dr. George W. Ziegelmueller (88, 1930–2019). Distinguish professor and director of forensics at Wayne State University from 1957 to 2006. His students won several regional and national tournaments and appeared in 20 elimination teams at the NDT, including teams in the finals in 1966 and 1967. His teams qualified to the NDT for 39 years, 28 years in a row from 1977 to 2005. In 1999, he hosted the NDT, and in the same year, the NDT Board of Trustees' George W. Ziegelmueller Award was founded to recognize a faculty member who has distinguished themselves in the communication profession while coaching teams to competitive success in the NDT. He was awarded the NDT Lucy Keele Award in 1999 for service to the NDT. He was a coauthor with Charles Dass and Jack Kay of the widely used textbook *Argumentation: Inquiry and Advocacy* (Allyn and Bacon). Ziegelmueller was president of the American Forensic Association from 1966 to 1968 and edited its journal, *JAFA*, from 1973 to 1977. He was also president of Delta Sigma Rho–Tau Kappa Alpha and the Michigan Association of Speech Communication.

Kenneth "Ken" Strange (69, 1949–2019). Director and debate coach at Augustana College (IL) for six years, Dartmouth College for 35 years, and Wake Forest for two years. A legendary coach, Strange's Dartmouth teams won the NDT three times (1984, 1988, and 1993), finished second five times (1981, 1983, 1987, 2003, and 2008), and reached elimination rounds at the NDT in 30 consecutive years from 1981 to 2010. He was also one of the most widely respected judges in the community, ranked in the top five judges of the decade for the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Beyond his impact at the collegiate level, Strange started the Dartmouth Debate Institute, which training thousands of high school students. In 2001, Strange's impressive career was recognized with the NDT's George W. Ziegelmueller Award.

Dr. Holt "Spike" Spicer (91, 1928–2019). Famed director of debate at Missouri State University (then Southwest Missouri State) from 1952 to 1965, who continued to coach and travel with team, winning the CEDA national championship in 1992. After high school, he served in the US Navy in 1946, caring for wounded soldiers during World War II. While attending the University of Redlands, he won NDT twice as a debater in 1951 and 1952. In addition to serving as the director of debate, he served as department chair and dean of College of Arts and Letters. The Missouri State Debate Forum is named after Spicer in his honor.

Dr. Robert Weiss (92, 1926–2019). Professor emeritus of communication and director of forensics for 42 years. Before joining DePauw, he coached debate at Wayne State and Northwestern Universities. He coached several national champion teams and, in 1962, coached the champions of the nationally televised *GE College Bowl*. He was president of Delta Sigma Rho–Tau Kappa Alpha and secretary-treasurer of the American Forensic Association. He received the Outstanding Scholarly Contribution Award from the National Educational Debate Association and the E. R. Nichols Award for "outstanding contributions to the furtherance of the forensics discipline" from Pi Kappa Delta. In 1999, Weiss was recognized by the American Association of University Professors for his "long and distinguished membership" (50 years), at the organization's annual convention in Washington, DC. That same year, the National Communication Association recognized Weiss with its highest honor, the Presidential Award.

Dr. Gerald H. Sanders (93, 1924–2018). First NDT champion with W. Scott Nobles for Southeastern State College in 1947. Sanders was department chair and debate coach at the College of Wooster (OH) and Miami (OH) University, serving as chair at Miami from 1981 to 1992. He was a Marine Corps colonel who served in World War II and the Korean War. Sanders was heavily involved in the AFA. He was president for two terms, 1978–1980 and 1980–1982, and received the AFA Distinguished Service Award in 1991. He also served on the NDT Board of Trustees.

Michael Dugaw (72, 1946–2018). Taught and directed debate at Lower Columbia College for almost four decades, retiring in 2012. He started coaching at LCC in 1973 and firmly established the program. His teams received two national Gold Awards from the Northwest Forensics Conference and several individual national championships.

Dr. Arnold "Arnie" Madsen (59, 1958–2017). Prominent debate coach who taught and coached at Illinois State University, the University of Pittsburgh, and the University of Northern Iowa. He provided a tremendous amount of service to the intercollegiate debate community, including hosting a large season-opening tournament at UNI and helping manage the operation of the NDT for several years. In 1987, he hosted the NDT at Illinois State. He held several service roles in the ADA and NDT.

Dr. James "Chester" Gibson (75, 1941–2017). Highly regarded educator and coach. He taught and coached championship teams at the high school level before joining the University of West Georgia, where he built the debate program into a nationally recognized program. He was later named the chair of the Department of Mass Communication and Theater. He retired in 2000. He received many local and national awards in his long career, including the NDT George Ziegelmueller Award in 2001.

Roy "Skip" Eno (71, 1946–2017). A senior lecturer and director of debate (1982–2017) at the University of Texas–San Antonio. During his tenure, UTSA earned several regional and national championships. He was named Coach of the Year by the Southern Speech Association and All-Star Coach by the CDA South-Central Region in 1996. He received CEDA's Brownlee Award for lifetime excellence in 2009, the Amy Fugate Leadership Award in 2010, the Dick Stine Coaching Award in 2011, and the Jeff Jarman Debate "Person of the Year."

Dr. Bill Henderson (83, 1932–2016). Semifinalist at the 1954 NDT for Central State College of Oklahoma. He served two years in the US Army Signal Corps and coached high school debate, most notably at Bellaire High School, where he coached national champions in debate, extemporaneous speaking, and original oratory. After completing his doctorate, he joined the University of Houston in 1973 as the director of debate, regularly coaching teams to elimination rounds at national tournaments. In 1976, he left Houston for the University of Northern Iowa, serving as the director of forensics until 1995. He was widely published in such journals as *Argumentation and Advocacy*. He served as treasurer of the AFA, as a member of the NDT Board of Trustees, and as host of the NDT in 1993. He was included into the NFL Hall of Fame in 1983, received the AFA NIET Distinguished Service Award in 1995, and received Outstanding Coach Awards from Emory University and the University of Utah.

Michael "Bear" Bryant (58, 1958–2016). A nationally competitive debater at Morehead State University, he later coached debate at Wayne State University, Eastern Illinois University, West Georgia College, and Weber State University. He coached many teams to late elimination rounds at national tournaments.

Dr. Russell T. Church (69, 1946–2016). Director of debate at the University of Tennessee, John Carroll University (OH), and Middle Tennessee State University. His teams were highly successful at both regional and national competition. He served as president and treasurer of CEDA. He was an author of argumentation and debate essays and one textbook. He was recognized for his coaching and service excellence with the CEDA Brownlee Award in 1997. After debate, Church was the chair of the speech and theater department at MTSU from 1998 to 2006.

Dr. Valgene "Doc" Littlefield (90, 1925–2016). As an undergraduate, he debated at Northeastern State College (OK). After college, he served in the 24th Infantry Division during post–World War II occupation of Japan. After his service, he completed his graduate study and served as debate director at NSC for 28 years. He was a highly respected coach and educator. He had many teams compete at the NDT, with teams qualifying for elimination rounds in seven consecutive years.

Dr. Alfred "Tuna" Snider (65, 1950–2015). University of Vermont Edwin W. Lawrence Professor of Forensics and internationally regarded debate theorist and director. Finished in third place at the 1972 NDT for Brown University. After earning his PhD from the University of Kansas, he became the director of the Lawrence Debate Union at the University of Vermont, serving in the position for over 40 years. Throughout his career, he promoted the value of debate as an alternative to violence and conflict across the world. He coached nationally competitive teams at the national championship tournaments hosted by CEDA, NDT, and IDEA. He served as director of the World Debate Institute, training students from over 40 countries. He was a frequently published scholar, and his work theorizing debate as a game has influenced debate scholarship ever since its publication.

Dr. Neil Berch (55, 1960–2015). Professor of political science and director of debate at West Virginia University. He was regarded as an expert on West Virginia state and local politics. He started coaching debate in 1997. He was a respected coach who trained many successful teams. He was highly involved in his CEDA region, the ADA, and high school Urban Debate Leagues.

Dr. Jack Kay (63, 1951–2015). An undergraduate competitor at Wayne State University in the 1970s who later returned to complete his doctorate there. He later moved to the University of Nebraska–Lincoln to serve as an associate professor and director of debate and forensics. At Nebraska, he coached a team to the semifinals of the NDT. In 1990, he returned to WSU to become chair of the communication department, later serving as an associate provost. He was a true communication educator and scholar, extensively published in the fields of argumentation, rhetoric, and political communication. His coauthored textbook with Dr. Ziegelmueller, *Argumentation: Inquiry and Advocacy*, was a widely used college debate textbook. He later moved to the University of Michigan–Flint to serve as provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs and later as interim chancellor. He then moved to Eastern Michigan University to become provost and executive vice president. He was a past president of the Central States Communication Association and Delta Sigma Rho–Tau Kappa Alpha.

Dr. David Matheny (82, 1931–2014). After receiving his PhD in rhetoric from the University of Oklahoma, Matheny coached debate at Texas Christian University and Emporia State University. He was a past president and inducted into the Hall of Fame at the Kansas Speech Communication Association. Beyond his support for ESU debate, he was active in the Kansas Humanities Council and ESU Theatre.

Greg Simerly (53, 1960–2014). Nationally prominent debate coach and director at Southern Illinois University, Missouri State University, Saint Louis University, Idaho State University, and Middle Tennessee State University. At SIU, he coached two CEDA national sweepstakes champion teams (1986, 1987) and a CEDA National Tournament champion in 1996. At Idaho State, his team was named the national "New Program of the Year." He coached debate for over 25 years. He served a term as the executive secretary of CEDA.

Dr. Paul Winters (89, 1924–2014). Beloved professor and mentor who led the University of the Pacific's debate team to national prominence. Before attending college, he was drafted into the Army Air Force during World War II, where he achieved the rank of corporal. After earning his PhD from Stanford, he taught and coached at San Joaquin Delta College. He went to the University of Pacific in 1956 to serve as a professor and forensic coach. He coached there until 1980. In 1964, he led his team to an NDT championship. The team also won the televised Collegiate Championship Debates, sponsored by the AFA and American Student Foundation. He won many awards during his career, including the National Coach of the Year Award in 1964 from the NFA.

Dr. Ted Jackson (84, 1929–2013). Longtime and successful coach at the University of Wisconsin, Michigan State University, and Illinois State University. Before coaching, he served for three years in the 3rd Coast Guard District Headquarters in New York City.

Dr. Thomas Kane (70, 1943–2013). Associate professor emeritus of communication and former director of the William Pitt Debating Union at the University of Pittsburgh. Kane taught at Pittsburgh from 1965 to 1999 and coached the Pitt debate team to an NDT national championship in 1981. He served as department chair from 1982 to 1988 and retired from the university in 1999. He coached the US debate team that traveled to the Soviet Union in 1980 and was named National Coach of the Year by Emory University in 1973 and Georgetown University in 1981.

Dr. James Alan "Al" Johnson (82, 1930–2013). Respected economics professor and debate coach at Colorado College, former director of the NDT from 1990 to 1992, and cofounder of CEDA and NPDA. He was awarded the AFA Golden Anniversary Outstanding Contribution to Service Award in 1999 and AFA Distinguished Service Award in 2001. His career at CC lasted almost 50 years.

Dr. Mark DeLoach (46, 1963–2010). Former associate professor and director of debate at the University of North Texas. DeLoach was known as an expert in debate and campaign communication. He served as a political debate analyst and was a member of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation. After coaching several nationally successful teams at UNT, he left in 2000 to become a principal with the Leadership Research Institute.

Dr. John "Jack" Lynch (89, 1921–2010). Coach at St. Anselm College (NH) for 46 years and founded the St. Thomas More Debate Society. Due to his coaching success, he was named the national collegiate debate coach in 1970. He authored over 30 handbooks on national college debate topics.

Dr. G. Allan "Al" Yeomans (89, 1921–2010). Member of the Samford University faculty from 1954 to 1968, he founded the university's communication studies department and the debate team. He also taught at the University of Mississippi, the University of Southwestern Louisiana–Lafayette, the Mississippi University for Women–Columbus, and the University of Tennessee. He was an active communication scholar published in several journals. He was executive secretary of the Southern Speech Communication Association and president of the Alabama and Tennessee Speech Communication Associations. He was named Tennessee's Speech Teacher of the Year in 1984. He also served as a communication consultant to several organizations.

John Lehman (81, 1938–2010). Former debate coach at Emporia State University. He was the director of the NDT from 1971 to 1972. He was a professor of communication and theater at ESU for over 40 years. Lehman received the ESU Service Citation Award in 1993 and was very active in the Emporia Arts Council. He served as a member of ESU Foundation Board of Trustees.

Contents

Introduction

THE FOURTH NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT DEBATE CONFERENCE

Kelly Michael Young, Wayne State University

The Need for a Fourth Development Conference

Intercollegiate debate has a long yet infrequent tradition of hosting national debate development conferences. The first conference was held in 1975 over six days at the Sedalia Retreat House near Denver, Colorado. That conference largely examined two professional concerns: research and scholarship and professional preparation, status, and rewards. According to Dr. George Ziegelmueller (1984), the organizer of the first two development conferences, the Sedalia conference had “a profound effect upon forensics instruction for years to come” (p. 1). The second conference, hosted ten years later over four days at Northwestern University, examined nine problems, with fragmentation of forensics organizations as the central concern. The second conference also examined summer institutes, evaluating individual events and selection of debate topics (Ziegelmueller, 1984). In 2009, the third development conference was hosted by Wake Forest University over the course of three days (Louden, 2010). This tradition of hosting occasional development conferences is important because the meetings “can alter our thinking, often bring us to consensus, and potentially energize us” (Louden, 2010, p. 2).

David Cram Helwich and I discussed the need for a development conference at the November 2020 American Forensic Association annual business meeting. It had been almost 12 years since the Wake Forest conference, and the landscape of intercollegiate policy debate had substantially changed during that time. For example, most, if not all, debate uses laptops rather than paper debate briefs, and due to the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2019–2020 season, debate was happening online as in-person competition was canceled, which raised questions about the need for in-person tournaments and how that might affect operating budgets. Since then, debating has occurred both face-to-face and in hybrid in-person and online modes. Additionally, a new generation of college students, Generation Z, has entered college, with different expectations and needs from their undergraduate education and extracurricular activities.

While a lot had changed, several issues from the second and third development conferences continued to confront the intercollegiate policy debate community. Perhaps the single most important issue is declining participation in policy debate. Since 2009, the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) and National Debate Tournament (NDT), two of the largest national organizations for policy debate, have continued to see falling participation levels and program loss. Reasons for this decline potentially include a failure in marketing the benefits of policy debate, insufficient budget and resources, director or coach burnout, and changing student demographics. Another possibility is that there are simply a lot of alternative forms of debate. In 1984, Ziegelmueller noted the growing diversity of formats due to the creation of CEDA, Lincoln-Douglas debate, and the return of individual events at the college level. Bauer, Young, and Fritch (2010) observed 26 years later that intercollegiate debate had become increasingly specialized and diverse in format, as even more debate styles and organizations came into existence. As a result of these changes, there are several different types of argumentative styles and strategies that could encourage more diverse student participation. Yet, the intercollegiate debate community continues to confront several problems, with a lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion across many formats of debate.

In 2009, the Wake Forest conference was "more complex" than the first two developments conferences because the "issues were more far ranging, relations with the academy more tenuous, and audiences more assorted" (Louden, 2010, p. 4). All these issues were even more pronounced in 2021. Like the 2009 development conference, which was in part a response to a highly publicized and viral incident at the 2008 CEDA Nationals (Stables, 2010), the 2021 conference was in response to a crisis, one caused by a national health emergency. However, our deliberations were not solely about strategies to deal with this immediate crisis, as many of these problems and issues predated and were only magnified by the pandemic. Some of the most important issues—diversity, governance, and participation levels—have been a problem for almost 37 years, since the second development conference.

Planning of the Fourth Development Conference and Its Mission

Cram Helwich and I started five months of planning for the fourth development conference starting in December 2020. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we made the decision to host the conference entirely online. This was necessary for everyone's safety, but it also made the conference very cheap and easy to host and more accessible to participants. Thanks to the generosity of the Department of Communication Studies and the debate team at the University of Minnesota, we did not have to charge any registration fee to participate. The conference was cosponsored by the American Forensic Association, American Debate Association, CEDA, and the NDT. About 80 directors and coaches and former directors and participants attended the conference.

Structurally, we agreed that we liked a lot about the 2009 Wake Forest conference, which met for three days, with two days for working groups to meet and produce conference reports and the final day dedicated to a "legislative session" that reviewed the work of each group (Louden, 2010, p. 4). We also met for three days and structured activities around working groups. In contrast to the Wake Forest conference, we let participants belong to more than one working group, and we interspersed key speakers and panels about relevant topics throughout the two working days. Like the Wake Forest conference, we finished the conference with presentations from each group. Recordings of these speakers, panels, and working groups can be found at https://www.americanforensicsassoc.org/debate-development-conference/.

As we selected themes for the working groups, Cram Helwich and I followed four principles to guide our choices: we should (1) promote accessibility, diversity, and inclusivity in debate, (2) make debate integral in the university's mission, (3) achieve retention and grow in intercollegiate debate programs, and (4) maximize in-person and remote debating to increase accessibility and inclusion while maintaining the education and interpersonal benefits of face-to-face debate.

We created ten working groups that were very broadly defined. Our morning sessions included Audiences, Non-Policy Debate, Governance, Research and Assessment, and Debate Topic Selection. Our afternoon sessions included Policy Format, Instruction, Program Development, Technology, and British Parliament Equity. We surveyed participants on what groups interested them and assigned them to one or two groups. Some of the working groups (e.g., Governance and Program Development) were existing topics that were discussed at the 2009 conference that still needed investigation and action. Other groups, such as those regarding justifying policy format, program assessment and research, technology, and equity in British Parliamentary debate, explored timely issues that arose during the past decade.

We let each group define its scope of discussion and deliverables to be produced by the group. The hope was that each group would produce a chapter for this publication to share with the debate community and additional sharable materials like new program documents or bylaw amendments to introduce changes. We were too ambitious in our hope that debate coaches and directors, after finishing one of the most challenging competitive seasons due to remote debate and COVID-19 restrictions, in between several national debate organization meetings, would produce many deliverables. However, our attitude was that it was better to be aggressive in our aspirations, if for no other reason than to inspire work in others. Despite falling short in what we hoped the conference would produce, we think the discussions and networking that occurred during the conference were incredibly productive and allowed for useful material to be shared with the debate community through this volume.

Due to the affordability, ease, and success of the 2021 development conference, we hope we can meet more often. We need to meet more frequently to share ideas and have discussions that are too frequently siloed within individual national organizations. Additionally, as some participants noted, it might be useful to have a one-day follow-up session a few months after the conference to discuss developments on key items.

This Volume's Plan of Action

We echo Louden's (2010) observation that we "were under no illusion that conferences change the world or that [their published proceedings] will remake debate or preserve an activity as we know it" (p. 6). Yet, the conference discussions highlighted that for many participants, they did not realize that concerns about the future of policy debate were so widespread. But the tone of the conference was not one of self-pity but, rather, an eagerness to present new ideas to address many of the common concerns that face the activity. Many of the ideas generated by the conference will take years of planning and action to implement. Thus, it is important to document the discussions as a record for future conversations and action, as the policy debate community lacks a common space for productive discussions about the activity.

Because we provided both vague and broad themes to each working group to allow the groups to organically define the scope of their discussions, we discovered that there was inevitable overlap in these conversations. While some group members saw this as concerning, we realized that it was inevitable and perhaps necessary that the conference discussions approach similar concerns or issues from different perspectives. For example, both the Research and Assessment and Policy Format working groups discussed the importance of student learning outcomes and the necessity for better assessment of student learning through debate. Additionally, the Audiences, Policy Format, and Program Development groups all had recommendations on how to sell competitive policy debate programs to administrators and students. In the chapters of this collection, you will find overlap, contradictions, and consensus. We think this reflects the nature of the conversations that took place over the three-day conference and gives us much to consider as we work to improve and sustain the future of policy debate and other debate formats.

Part 1 of this volume includes a call for a new research agenda that includes systematic research on debate and forensic activities and assessment of the activities' learning outcomes. Brian Lain and Clayton Webb, in "A New Research Agenda," begin the discussion by outlining some of the reasons why there has been a lack of dedicated research in debate and call for more research on the effect of participation in intercollegiate debate. To produce better scholarship on the impact of debate participation, Matthew Moore, Benjamin Warner, and Clayton Webb's chapter, "Needing New Sources: The Call for New Data Collection in College Debate," contends that we need better systems to collect high-quality data about debate participation. They suggest that debate needs a unified and transparent database and coding system and new data from an annual census, program-level information, and debate round outcomes. To measure student learning from debate participation, Karen Anderson-Lain, Paul Mabrey, Ben Voth, and Brian Lain's chapter, "Student Learning Outcomes and High-Impact Practices," examines how we can create student learning outcomes (SLOs) appropriate for debate activities and identifies several best practices for measuring student learning. They close their chapter with discussion of how competitive debate could be assessed as a high-impact learning activity. Jacquelyn Poapst, David Cram Helwich, and Jordan Foley's contribution, "Facilitating Research: A New Agenda," outlines several ways we could facilitate research through curation, funding, calls, awards, and collaboration. Kyle Cheesewright, Rebecca Border Sietman, and Sarah Partlow-Lefevre's chapter, "On Standardizing Assessment and External Review of Debate and Forensic Teams," argues for a need for a tripartite method for internal program assessment and the creation of a national system of external review. In "Data Curation: Challenges and a Proposal," Robert Groven and Jason Regnier explore the need to create a national debate research clearinghouse that would house a searchable database for all research, theory, and data on debate.

Part 2 highlights the need for national governance action. The chapter "Better College Policy Debate Governance," produced by the working group led by Eric Morris and Gordan Stables, examines how improvements and efficiency in debate governing structures could help address declining participation rates, programs in crisis, and uneven service commitments. They call for the creation of new professional development activities, alumni advocacy networks, and evidence-based debates for public audiences, better organizational coordination, and a conference structure for NDT governance. The next contribution, "Supporting and Developing New Programs," by a working group led by Alexander Hiland and David Cram Helwich, examines hurdles to creating and sustaining debate programs and offers suggestions on how national organizations and directors can overcome these challenges.

Part 3 broadly explores ways to reach key audiences. Travis Cram, Matthew Moore, Kelly Young, in "Building Student-Centered Learning Practices in Policy Debate," contend that debate directors and national organizations need to better sell debate programs to a new generation of students who value their time and education differently than past generations. Building on the discussions found in part 1 of this collection, Cram, Moore, and Young argue that programs need specific, detailed SLOs, as well as mapping of the SLOs onto specific debate activities. Examining a different audience, the university administrators Natalie Bennie and Michael Janas's chapter, "Communicating to Institutional Audiences," investigates the challenges in communicating effectively with internal university stakeholders and how to best interact with those administrators.

Part 4 calls for specific, necessary, and timely reforms. The chapter written by Gina Iberri-Shea, Kyle Cheesewright, and Robert Ruiz, "Equity in British Parliamentary Debate," examines the equity crisis that erupted at the 2021 United States Universities Debating (USUD) championship and offers broad best practices for better equity practices at that tournament. The volume concludes with a chapter titled "Topic Selection Process Reform," by the Topic working group, led by Allison Harper, Mikaela Malsin, and Tripp Rebrovick, calling for a longer topic review process that models a "revise and resubmit" model with a different topic rotation model.

Remaining Challenges

Conferences are important for many reasons, but one of the most critical is that they can inspire us (Louden, 2010). There was certainly a buzz of excitement during the three days of the conference. However, as preparation for summer high school camps and the college preseason began, along with other personal and professional obligations, momentum quickly stalled on many of the projects and deliverables discussed at the conference. While this volume documents the concerns and proposed solutions needed to sustain and grow college debate in the future, we need more than periodic conferences. As Klumpp (2000) notes, development conferences "establish an agenda for argumentation and forensics that demands the attention of all" (p. 23). Yet, as Ziegelmueller (1984) cautions, "A development conference cannot legislate change. It can only seek to influence through its reasoned discourse" (p. 1).

Adding to Ziegelmueller's observation, we argue that even agreement on a course of action is not sufficient. There needs to be people who are willing to craft and put these proposals into action. One problem that confronts the academic debate community is that too much service is done by too few people. And many of these people are directors of active programs, with heavy time demands within their own home institution and debate program. Asking for yet more service from these people risks service burnout. We need more people pitching in through volunteer service to national organizations and willingness to lead on important issues. Too many people wait for a national organization or officer to address an issue that could be initiated by concerned individuals working in coordination with national organizations.

The future for policy debate and other competitive debate formats poses many challenges. The participants at the 2021 National Debate Development Conference developed some strong suggestions that we should consider offering as proposals to our national organizations. But organizations are only as strong as their membership. We all have a stake in how these problems are addressed, and we all need to do more to shape the future we want.

Special Thanks

On a personal note, I want to thank David Cram Helwich for his help in leading and hosting the 2021 conference and coediting this volume. David had an incredibly difficult year in 2021 and overcommitted himself on several fronts. Yet, he continued to say yes to my ideas that consumed more of his time. We have been friends for several years, and I could not have worked with a better person on this giant project. Many thanks, DCH!

I also want to thank the guest speakers, workgroup leaders, and participants at the 2021 conference. The 2020–2021 debate season and academic year was incredibly challenging for everyone, yet you still found the energy and time to participate in the discussions and contribute to this volume. I thank you for all that you did for the conference and this volume and for your dedication to your students and the debate community.

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Part I

Data, Research, and Assessment

1

A New Research Agenda

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Writing in the 2010 *Navigating Opportunity* collection, Gordon Mitchell and the "Pathways to Innovation to Debate Scholarship" working group noted that at the time, "the scholarly dimension of the debate enterprise is undergoing significant transitional pressures" (p. 93). After reviewing the importance of research in the first two debate conferences in Sedalia and Evanston and its subsequent absence from other conferences (we assume Quail Roost) and inattention devoted to advancing scholarly pursuits in debate (the NCA-AFA Alta conference notwithstanding), Mitchell and the group argued, "It is clear that a now thirty-five year gap in institutional attention by debate leadership organizations to the direction and prospects for debate-related scholarship warrants redress" (2010, p. 95). And yet, even after offering seven different resolutions in that essay (most of which have not been addressed systematically and many of which we will echo in the following pages), we must admit that this redress has not yet occurred (making debate scholarship now a 45-year gap in attention).

Despite the presence of the NCA-AFA conference, despite mention in three different debate conference publications, the research agenda is still undefined. Research approaches in debate have tended to be ad hoc, to be shortsighted, and to lack systematic design that would continue beyond a single research essay or even conference paper. We have an incredibly large number of data points: ballots, speaker points, tournament awards, argument briefs, student GPAs, travel budget information, student demographic information, and judge demographic information, to name but a few. Yet there is little systematic tracking of this information outside of the individual study, and mostly directors of programs themselves must keep up with information that benefits the entire activity. Other than some individual approaches to student learning outcomes, like critical thinking, and some demographic variables, like gender or race of participants, there have been few research questions that defined the activity of debate and the pursuit of knowledge.

Conceivably this inheres even in the statement from the Wake Forest conference working group on innovations in debate scholarship, which viewed research as a "dimension" of debate—a part of the activity but not all of it (Mitchell et al., 2010, p. 93). Indeed, the explanation for the decline of research suggested in that working group is that the competitive dimension and the research dimension are zero-sum, and we must do one or the other as practitioners. However, research on civic engagement has suggested that debate faculty who are active in tournament competition are also active in civic activities (Lain et al., 2018). The last conference's tenure and promotion working group suggested viewing competitive activities (e.g., brief writing and judging) as creative research in the formulation of a portfolio for promotion (Rowland et al., 2010). Perhaps what is needed is a change to the way we view research and indeed the way we view debate as a research activity. Debate is a learning experience; as such, every practitioner is involved in the process of creating knowledge. Whether that is individual personal knowledge, a learning outcome, or examination of external literature, this knowledge production is itself valuable and worthy of the designation "research." What we must gather are not divisions inside the work done by debate practitioners (research, competition, outreach) but ways that these activities that already exist can further be investigated, systematized, curated, and assessed.

Perhaps the gap in research is in part due to the difficulty of recognizing the whole instead of the interlocking "dimensions" that program assessment offers. The myriad functions of a debate program and debate professional (competitive, scholarly, civic, pedagogical, managerial, etc.) often exist without benchmarks or comparisons with other programs or faculty. While we have work suggesting the creation of a new system for evaluation of debate faculty (Rowland et al., 2010) and several programs that anecdotally share their experiences concerning assessment, a standardized and AFA-supported process is necessary to ensure the survival of debate programs and faculty in the future.

It is against this backdrop that the research and program assessment group dealt with its charge of developing a program assessment plan to implement in the coming year and development of a research agenda about debate. To adequately address these two interrelated projects, the working group divided the task into five constituent parts. These roughly correspond to five essential questions:

1. What new data can be collected for both research and program assessment?
2. How can we demonstrate the significance of debate as an educational activity to both allow research to continue and assist programs with benchmarks?
3. How can we incentivize research and data collection in debate?
4. How might we standardize the process of program assessment?
5. How can we better collect and organize existing and future research?

For each of these questions, group members describe the problem in greater detail and then suggest solutions and in most cases next steps.

Perhaps the most central research question for debate is, What is the impact of participation in the debate experience? Whether this question is used to examine alumni, current students, audience opinion, demographic variation, or even argument style preference, it underlies much of the investigation of the activity. To advance this question, much of the thoughts of the working group concern student learning outcomes (SLOs). We have suggested five SLOs (oral communication, critical thinking, information literacy, civic engagement, and intercultural knowledge and competence), based on the language of the American Association of Colleges and Universities. This list is not meant to be exhaustive or exclusive of other learning outcomes but simply to get the conversation started. In the different chapters in this part, we discuss how to conceptualize, embed measurements in, measure, assess, report, incentivize research on, and curate student data on these SLOs. These data also become the basis for meaningful program assessment.

In 2010, Karla Leeper and the innovation and debate working group echoed what many people have said informally, that debate hits multiple SLOs and should be considered a "high-impact practice" (Kuh, 2008). While this argument was an aspiration in 2010, we must make it a reality in the future. Collecting new data, encouraging measurement of SLOs, facilitating new research, standardizing program assessment, and curating our research for review are all necessary to prove the claim that debate is a high-impact practice and must be recognized and supported as such by colleges and universities everywhere. This will be a long process of establishing not a series of essays to publish but instead a culture of investigation and review supported by organizations, institutions, events, external support, and, yes, even reports. We will need new tools for investigation, and we will need to adapt existing tools we have. However, it will be necessary to prevent another 45-year gap in attention to research in debate.

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2

Needing New Sources

THE CALL FOR NEW DATA COLLECTION IN COLLEGE DEBATE

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As universities continue to experience pressure on their budgets associated with the myriad challenges faced by institutions of higher learning, future investment in debate programs is far from assured. Program directors find themselves in a perpetual debate about the value of the activity, the stakes of which are existential for programs. To ensure the survival of the activity, directors must win these debates

The arguments marshaled in defense of debate have the virtue of truth on their side. Our activity provides a one-of-a-kind educational experience that cannot be matched anywhere else in the academy. We excel at delivering most, if not all, of the crucial student learning outcomes tracked by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U, 2014). However, for a community obsessed with providing evidence to substantiate our claims, our ability to provide evidence-based defenses of our programs is constrained by the lack of available data. Program directors are often forced to cobble together ad hoc reports compiled with cherry-picked anecdotes about the performance of individual teams.

Academic research on the value of competitive debate would also provide directors with additional evidence that could be marshaled on behalf of debate programs. Unfortunately, the same lack of access to high-quality data that makes it difficult for directors to compile metrics that speak to the educational utility of debate also makes it difficult for scholars interested in debate to make inferences and test hypotheses about debate and debate practices. Until we develop a transparent system of data collection and a set of data-curation norms, academic research on debate will continue to be limited to one-off projects that impose significant data-collection costs on individual scholars.

We propose three new data sources for research about debate and a mechanism to coordinate the data to make it more useful. Debate researchers need to develop mechanisms to gather data about the individuals participating in debate, debate programs, and debate rounds. Each of these projects will be detailed to some extent below, but first we need a framework to make sure the data can be merged in a meaningful way so that data about programs and individuals can be used to inform each other. This will be no easy task, as it will require dedicated researchers to constantly maintain the data year to year. We believe academic incentives such as publication and citations may get some researchers on board to the project, but there may need to be efforts by debate governing bodies to help finance some incentives for data gathering.

Debate should adopt the data practices commonly used in social science disciplines in creating a unified database and coding systems for its participating individuals and institutions. The work of the International Correlates of War (ICOW) project in international relations is instructive (Sarkees & Schafer, 2000). International relations scholars have many types of information they need to use, including data on conflict, trade and investment, alliances, and other country-level variables of interest. To make it easier for scholars to use data from different sources, ICOW generated a set of country-specific identifiers that allow scholars to harmonize data collection across subjects. For example, the United States' COW code is 2, Canada's is 20, and China's is 710. It has become a convention for many data sets in international relations to identify country data using these COW codes. When these codes are not included, they can be easily created. This allows researchers to easily merge data from different sources and to create new data sets that leverage the information from existing sources for new research projects that have different levels of analysis. For example, a person with access to country-year data in one data set can turn these data into a dyad-year (US-Canada, US-China) or directed-dyad-year (US to Canada, Canada to US, US to China, China to US) data sets to facilitate different types of analysis. Debate can adopt these practices to develop universal codes for debaters, debate teams (the combination of two debaters), schools, and judges to ease the burden of combining new data sources that are developed over time.

We have identified three new sources of data that could be valuable for debate directors and academics interested in debate. First, we propose that an annual census be conducted to provide information about the students participating in debate. These annual surveys can be used to gather information about students participating in the activity and give researchers the opportunity to link student survey data to round outcome and institutional data. The low-hanging fruit for survey data collection is simple demographic data. Survey questions could also be formulated to track learning outcomes. There is ample survey research in other disciplines that serves as proof of concept for using survey data for communication skills, social and emotional learning, future plans and outcomes, time spent learning, civic engagement, critical thinking, polarization, ideology, and other useful topics. By linking survey results with unique debater identification numbers, time series cross-section data can be compiled to allow researchers to track outcomes over time.

The second area of new data development should be data about debate programs. There have been a few articles in the past that have investigated program characteristics (Bauer & Young, 2000; Jarman, 2013, Murphy, 1992; Rogers, 1991), but there has been little effort to make these data available on a regular basis. The result is that we have a series of articles that provide temporary snapshots into program characteristics, but we have no way to evaluate the development of programs over time. Collecting information about team budgets, coaching staffs, academic positions of coaches and directors, number of team participants, and other team characteristics can give researchers a rich trove of data that can be paired with individual survey data and round outcome data. These data will be useful for directors seeking to justify larger budgets or new coaching staff positions. By tracking programs year to year, we can also understand the factors that lead programs to leave CEDA-NDT debate for other formats or leave debate altogether.

The third area for data collection is round outcome data. The study of round outcomes has important implications for understanding how bias can influence round outcomes (e.g., gender and/or racial bias among judges), what sort of strategies are more effective against different styles of cases (e.g., topicality versus kritik affirmatives as compared to kritik-centered negative strategies versus kritik affirmatives), and how styles of arguments change over time. Adding additional data to the already public results of debate rounds (participants, judges, win/loss, sides, and speaker points) would require debate ballots to have a series of questions for judges to answer in addition to the round decision. We imagine a data set in which each ballot could produce evidence of what the affirmative case was, what negative positions were in the first negative speech, what negative arguments were in the last speech, what arguments influenced the judge's decision, and identifying markers to link the competitors and judges to other survey data.

These three types of data can help debate directors make the case for the activity and provide communication scholars with resources that can help them advance their academic careers. The data can also be useful for current debaters who might be interested in leveraging these data to make empirical claims about debate practices. In this short survey of our recommendations, we have provided a brief description of what these data curation and collection efforts might entail, but more time and energy will be required to set these plans in motion.

We propose that a professional service committee be constructed that would oversee the plans for the collection and publication of these data and help develop the standards for data collection and data transparency. Academic service is an important element of most tenure-track contracts, so the members of the committee may or may not require compensation. The members of the committee could rotate on a regular basis, and the members could redefine the goals of the committee and the scope of the group's work as new data sources are proposed and as new needs are identified by the committee and the broader debate community.

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3

Student Learning Outcomes and High-Impact Practices

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The community of scholars, educators, professors, and educational professionals within the American Forensics Association are well served to utilize established student learning outcomes (SLOs) and to consider how to actualize speech and debate as a “high impact” educational activity. Our AFA working group recommends careful consideration and utilization of these student learning outcomes utilizing the National Communication Association Learning Outcome in Communication (NCA-LOCs) and relevant university SLOs in both program assessment at the individual program level and across programs in a systematic investigation of SLOs of debate from a disciplinary perspective. To this end, we argue for the establishment of global SLOs for debate, best practice for assessment of SLOs, and proposed future research directions for debate as a high-impact practice.

Establishing Student Learning Outcomes for Debate

Almost all universities utilize various student learning outcomes to evaluate their academic work in various contexts. There are dozens of SLOs, and they are readily available. The debate and speech communities have utilized their own educational rubrics primarily in the form of ballots, but these recommendations allow us to sharpen the measurement of our valuable educational activity in forensics (speech and debate). The ad hoc approach to assessment of SLOs has eroded the academic integrity of debate and speech programs. As higher education has become increasingly data driven, intercollegiate debate has lagged other academic and programming areas in assessment, particularly in providing evidence-based assessment. Partlow-Lefevre's (2012) overview of the key components of the assessment process provides an important primer on the basics of the assessment process. As debate programs are being pressed to justify their importance via student learning outcomes on a programmatic level as well as to connect SLOs prescribed at the university level, the creation of national student learning standards for debate assessment becomes more pressing. Hence, we propose overarching SLOs for debate as well as provide examples of how the proposed SLOs can be mapped to university-level SLOs.

The NCA-LOCs was a faculty initiative that established core learning outcomes for communication studies as a discipline (Dannels, 2016; NCA, 2015). While not all forensic and debate programs are housed in communication studies, the learning outcomes of debate programs are intrinsically connected to communication. Furthermore, the NCA (2015) report encourages mapping of the learning outcomes to cocurricular activities. While Lain and Anderson-Lain (2021) aligned five key NCA-LOCs to specific debate measures (e.g., ballots, briefs, cases, speaker points), the debate research community has not attempted to systematically approach student learning outcomes and assessment practices.

In this working group, we argue for the need to establish broad-based SLOs that can be aligned to national standards for assessment in higher education. Thus, we propose the following five global SLOs: (1) oral communication, (2) critical thinking, (3) information literacy, (4) civic engagement, and (5) intercultural knowledge and competence. While these are not an exhaustive list of possible SLOs, we selected these five because they are all clear learning outcomes used in assessment of student learning in both academic undergraduate programs and student affairs (AAC&U, 2014). Each of these SLOs has a clear definition and associated rubric that can be modified for the assessment process from the AAC&U (2014). Definitions of each SLO, how that term aligns with topics within the AAC&U VALUE rubrics (2014), and how those further align with the NCA Learning Outcomes in Communication (NCA-LOCs) (NCA, 2015) are found in table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Mapping SLOs to AAC&U Rubrics (2014) and NCA-LOCs (2015)

SLO	AAC&U Rubric Categories	NCA-LOCs
Oral Communication: Prepared, purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors	• Organization • Language • Delivery • Supporting material • Central message	LOC#4: Create messages appropriate to the audience, purpose, and context (locate and use information relevant to the goals, audiences, purposes, and contexts; adapt messages to the diverse needs of individuals, groups, and contexts; and adjust messages while in the process of communicating)
Critical Thinking: Habit of the mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion	• Explanation of issues • Evidence • Influence of context and assumptions • Student's position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) • Conclusions and related outcomes	LOC#5: Critically analyze messages (identify meanings embedded in messages; recognize the influence of messages; engage in active listening; enact mindful responding to messages)
Information Literacy: The ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and share that information for the problem at hand	• Determine the extent of the information needed • Access the needed information • Evaluate information and its sources critically • Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose • Access and use information ethically and legally	LOC#4: Create messages appropriate to the audience, purpose, and context (locate and use information relevant to the goals, audiences, purposes, and contexts) LOC#5: Critically analyze messages (identify meanings embedded in messages; recognize the influence of messages)
Civic Engagement: Working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference	• Diversity of communities and culture • Analysis of knowledge • Civic identity and commitment • Civic communication • Civic action and reflection • Civic contexts/structures	LOC#9: Influence public discourse (frame and evaluate local, national and/or global issues; utilize communication to respond to issues at the local, national, and/or global level; advocate for a course of action to address local national and/or global issues)
Intercultural Knowledge and Competence: Set of cognitive, affective, and behavior skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts	• Knowledge: cultural self-awareness • Knowledge: cultural worldview frameworks • Skills: empathy • Skills: verbal and nonverbal communication • Attitudes: curiosity • Attitudes: openness	LOC#8: Utilize communication to embrace difference (respect diverse perspectives and the ways they influence communication; articulate one's own cultural standpoint and how it affects communication and worldview)

Table 3.2. Mapping SLOs to University Standards: Southern Methodist University (2021)

Oral Communication
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME
Students will demonstrate an ability to engage in clear and concise live communication.
SUPPORTING SKILLS
1. Students will demonstrate a clearly and consistently observable organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) within the context of a presentation. 2. Students will make language choices in the context of a presentation that are thoughtful, appropriate to the audience, and generally support the effectiveness of the presentation.
Critical Reasoning
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME
Students will demonstrate university-level critical reasoning proficiencies through written expression.
SUPPORTING SKILLS
1. Students will craft arguments using the critical reasoning skills developed throughout the course. 2. Students will demonstrate the ability to develop paragraphs and organize them in a logical progression. 3. Students will craft sentences with attention to word choice, sentence variety, and sentence structure.
Information Literacy
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME
Students will demonstrate an understanding of information literacy.
SUPPORTING SKILLS
1. Students will select and use the appropriate research methods and search tools for needed information. 2. Students will evaluate sources for quality of information for a given information need.

Additionally, the proposed SLOs can be connected to the NCA-LOCs as well as university-level SLOs.

Additionally, directors of debate and speech are well served to review SLOs composed at their local universities, aligning the broad proposed SLOs to your specific institution's student learning outcomes. For example, Southern Methodist University's alignment with three of the five proposed SLOs can be seen in table 3.2.

The five overarching SLOs proposed are a starting point for debate programs. We argue that we should treat these overarching SLOs as a living document and consider future research directions regarding additional SLOs, such as social-emotional learning (e.g., Young, 2021).

Best Practices for Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Debate as a community and as a discipline is well positioned for assessing student learning. In fact, some student learning improvement principles should already be familiar to many debate professionals, like evidence-based assessment, argument-based validity, alignment, or process over product. While debate practitioners are well positioned regarding and perhaps even familiar with assessment and student learning improvement, they need to make intentional and significant strides toward developing both program- and organizational-level frameworks for assessment of student learning outcomes. Declining participation numbers, external budgetary pressures, outside demands for accountability, proliferation of debate formats, and other potential extracurricular trade-offs are just some of the more negative reasons to pursue more systematic assessment efforts. Rather than pursue assessment efforts for just external and perhaps more negatively perceived reasons, debate professionals can also benefit from the collaboration within debate as a discipline, interdisciplinary work outside of debate or communication studies, personal professional development, program growth and improvement, research opportunities, and perhaps most importantly, improving student learning and student debate experiences.

A starting point for thinking about better practices for the assessment of student learning might be thinking about why one is assessing in the first place and what is the alignment between student learning outcomes, curricular or programming interventions, and assessment. Use of student learning data, or why one is motivated to assess student learning, should help drive the entire assessment cycle or process. Is it to report out for accountability? Is it to use internally for program improvement? Is it to compare across different programs, formats, or institutions within the debate discipline? Or is it a combination of these and other reasons? Alignment is another critical principle when thinking about assessment. One cannot tinker or redesign learning outcomes, curriculum, or assessment without also redesigning the other elements. For example, if you draft a new learning outcome for civic learning but do not implement programming to teach/learn civic learning, your efforts to assess it will be wasted, as you are not designing learning experiences to emphasize student civic learning.

The identification and alignment of ways to collect evidence of student learning might be the area with which many people in debate are least familiar. Assessment data includes direct assessment of student learning outcomes, including specific evidence of learning, such as student-produced briefs, recordings of debate rounds, or student ePortfolios, and indirect assessment, such as surveys or alumni feedback. Debate administrators should survey their current on- and off-campus partners to identify if there are instruments already recognized and used for assessment that could be adapted. For example, your campus might be using the NCA (2015) oral communication or AAC&U VALUE rubrics (2014), as demonstrated above. If so, then utilizing those rubrics might be a great way to use data within your own institutional context. If that is not the case or not useful for you, then you might need to review other communities' literature on assessment for instruments that could be used. For example, within civic learning, the Political Engagement Project survey offers a way to survey student attitudes, skills, and behaviors before and after the debate season. If you are unable to find an already existing instrument or if what is currently available is too costly or not the right fit for your context, you may need to create and validate your own. For example, there is no shortage of critical thinking, problem solving, or critical reasoning assessment instruments. But many of the available instruments are proprietary, designed for different student populations or contexts, or align with different definitions or constructs of critical thinking. In this case, one may want to research, develop, and validate a new instrument that is more appropriate to the debate, argumentation, and critical thinking context.

As a community and discipline, academic debate is well positioned to move forward with proactive, intentional, and collaborative efforts to assess student learning. Creating a national clearinghouse for assessment and student learning improvement would help transform the often ad hoc, sometimes shortsighted efforts into a sustainable mechanism that could help with professional development, program evaluation, community-wide assessment, programming improvement, research opportunities, longitudinal work, and other long-term investments in the debate community.

Debate as a High-Impact Practice

Within the higher education assessment literature, high-impact practices (HIPs) are considered the academic gold standard to demonstrate a deeper level of engaged learning. HIPs are "institutional-structured student experiences inside or outside of the classroom that are associated with elevated performance across multiple engagement activities and desired outcomes, such as deep learning, persistence, and satisfaction with college" (Watson et al., 2016, p. 65). Kuh (2008) argued that high-impact practices engage students in learning activities that foster essential learning. Leskes and Miller (2006) provided insight into these "purposeful pathways," arguing for the need for educators to embrace pedagogies that empower students through civic, integrative, inquiry, and global learning pathways.

The HIPs recognized by the AAC&U are used to evaluate the level of learning engagement for students in higher education (AAC&U, 2014; Kuh, 2008; Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013; Watson et al., 2016). For example, HIPs are a key component of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which is used by universities to track first-year and senior students' engagement and to document evidence for accrediting agencies.

While researchers (Partlow-Lefevre, 2012; Stone Watt, 2012) have argued that debate functions as a HIP, it is not currently recognized as one of the 11 HIPs by the AAC&U. Gaining official recognition of debate as a HIP would allow debate programs and debate across the curriculum programs to argue for their academic value for students' overall learning experience in higher education. The documentation and research needed to undertake this endeavor require a systematic data collection and analysis of debate as a discipline and practice. The most recent addition to HIPs by the AAC&U was ePortfolios. Watson et al. (2016) describe a sustained research agenda cutting across multiple universities, coordinated in a coalition with a commitment to academic peer-reviewed research.

A coordinated research agenda with the goal of establishing debate as a HIP would require us to assess student learning outcomes, as well as to demonstrate that the learning that is occurring fits key elements from a pedagogical design and curriculum development perspective. Kuh and O'Donnell (2013, p. 10) identified eight key elements of high-impact practices:

- Performance expectations set at appropriately high levels

- Significant investment of time and effort by students over an extended period of time
- Interactions with faculty and peers about substantive matters
- Experiences with diversity, wherein students are exposed to and must content with people and circumstances that differ from those with which students are familiar
- Frequent, timely, and constructive feedback
- Periodic, structured opportunities to reflect and integrate learning
- Opportunities to discover relevance of learning through real-world applications
- Public demonstration of competence

Debate in its various forms both within and beyond the classroom encapsulates these key elements. As noted above in our best practices for assessment, the research on these elements is already under way. However, this research has been ad hoc and lacked the coordination needed to demonstrate the academic rigor and relevance of debate as a HIP. We strongly encourage the development of a research team to build a coalition to undertake this endeavor.

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4

Facilitating Research

A NEW AGENDA

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A critical component to ensuring a sustainable and strengthened research agenda within collegiate debate is to craft mechanisms that can facilitate the advent of research. Our group identified several potential issues leading to the dearth in debate-centered research production. First, the lack of accessible and navigable prior debate-centered research for new researchers to use for citation makes producing new debate research an arduous task. Second, the lack of funding opportunities for debate-centered research disincentivizes scholars from focusing their energies on unrewarding debate scholarship. Third, the dearth of directed publication calls for debate research makes the task of coordinating debate-centered analysis a difficult, untraveled path. Lastly, younger debate researchers may feel unprepared to engage in debate scholarship, instead investing their research careers in fields with mentorships and direction.

Curation

To facilitate debate research, our group recommends several actions be taken. First, to rectify the lack of navigable prior debate research, the debate community should work toward collecting existing debate-specific and debate-adjacent research studies and articles. The aim of this collection should be toward *curation*, not simply compilation. To best facilitate research with debate relevance, our activity must understand the importance of interdisciplinary ties. With an evolving world, our tactics for research must evolve as well to account for the increasing overlap and ties between fields of study. As Tobi and Kampen (2018) contend, "A (mono)disciplinary approach, be it a psychological, economical or technical one, is too limited to capture any one of these challenges" that society faces (p. 1210).

With this understanding in mind, creating a curated collection of debate and debate-adjacent research can aid debate community researchers in their attempts to create debate scholarship by highlighting research studies and methodological pieces with potential high applicability to debate practices and learning outcomes, particularly from fields like political communication, educational assessment, organizational communication, rhetoric, and psychology. Our group recommends a curation that includes the categories listed in table 4.1.

The goal of this collaboration of prior research is to provide scholars within debate the framework with which to promote new research early on in their graduate and postgraduate careers. Having a repository of curated information that highlights potential theories, research designs, and concepts to analyze within debate can aid in providing direction for studies for coaches and students hoping to incorporate research about debate in their classwork and research production.

Funding

Our next recommendation for facilitating research for debate is to make available funding opportunities for research, including grants from forensics organizations and the funding of research projects from major governmental and nonprofit funding sources (e.g., the National Endowment of Humanities [NEH] or George Soros's Open Society Foundation). As Bromham et al. (2016) explain, lack of funding opportunities within fields not only will disincentivize research but will also decrease the quality of research that does occur. We have identified a potential issue for debate-centered research production, which is that a significant amount of the scholarship produced by coaches is either shifting to nondebate fields or is debate scholarship presented in its fledgling state at conferences like NCA but never advanced to publication stages. Establishing the opportunity for funding

Table 4.1. Curation Table of Contents

Relevant theories	Research methodologies	Analyzable concepts
Media theories (mass society and propaganda; media effects; diffusion of innovation; social cognitive theory; cultivation theory; semiotics/cultural studies)	Survey analysis	Student learning outcomes (argumentation theory knowledge and application; audience analysis; listening (focused) and notetaking (flowing); presentation skills; reading (close); topic knowledge)
Political communication (communication competence; media literacy; civic engagement; political knowledge; political socialization)	Time series analysis	Cognitive skills (attention control and focus; planning; cognitive flexibility; critical thinking; goal setting; perspectives: logical reasoned analysis, social cause analysis)
Interpersonal communication (communication privacy management theory; social penetration theory; relational patterns of interaction theory; identity management theory; dyadic power theory; social exchange theory; relational turbulence theory)	Experimental design	Emotional skills (emotional knowledge; emotional regulation; resilience: persistence through adversity/exhaustion/failure)
Organizational communication (communicative constitution of organization)	Ethnography	Social skills (prosocial and cooperative behavior; receiving and applying constructive feedback; leadership development)
Intercultural Communication (Hofstede's Model of Cultural dimensions; Co-cultural communication; Face negotiation theory; Communication Accommodation Theory; Uncertainty Management Theory)	Interviews/ focus groups	Values (Understanding ethical decision-making, Display of ethical values, Intellectual values, Positive team culture building)
Educational Models (Behaviorist model; Humanist theories of learning; Activity model; Situated learning; Information processing model)	Content analysis	Identity (Self-knowledge; Relational knowledge; Self and community advocacy skills)

of debate-centered research could turn the tide back to consistent scholarly production of debate research.

Research Calls

In line with the creation of a curated debate scholarship repository as well as funding opportunities is the need for a development of calls for research, debate paper concepts, and participation in potential studies. Our group recommends that the American Forensics Association publish annual research calls in conjunction with relevant debate and argumentation journals like *Contemporary Argumentation and Debate* and *Argumentation and Advocacy*, highlighting potential research area needs and concepts for future publications. Table 4.2 highlights examples of what type of research calls could be promoted.

Awards

Like the idea that funding opportunities can facilitate research, we also recommend the creation of awards for new and excellent debate research. Many coaches and graduate students who produce scholarship would highly

Table 4.2. Research Call Categories

Debate history	Debate theory	Research settings
• History of identity-based debate • History of women in debate • History of specific debate programs	• Conditionality • Fiat • Topicality • Framework • Burden of proof • Presumption	• Argumentation/public speaking courses • Tournaments • Squad rooms • Debate camps • Experiment lab
Judging	**Novice debate**	**Learning outcomes**
• Effect of panels on decisions • Styles of RFDs • Judge flowing practices	• Retention and recruitment • Tournament vs. class novices • Topic knowledge in novices	• Social competence • Civic dialogue • Knowledge • Emotional growth • Democratic participation

benefit from that scholarship being recognized and rewarded. The ability for awards to motivate production has been observed across multiple fields. Scott (2019) highlights that within business realms, the addition of employee awards and recognition not only boosts morale but also contributes to higher levels of production and innovation in the workplace. We hypothesize that with the ability to earn tenure and promotion and secure future career opportunities, debate scholars would be more motivated to produce debate-centered research if they could use awards earned from that research in their career trajectories.

Research Collaborative

Our final recommendation to facilitate research is the creation of a research collaborative for graduate students and new researchers. The debate community sustains itself in many ways off the underpaid and unpaid labor of graduate students. In many ways, our efforts have failed to provide those graduate students the tools to flourish in their own academic and career goals. While many other academic communities boast well-established mentoring programs, research colloquiums, and professional development for graduate students, debate does not provide many of those things to its younger coaches. While coaching throughout the year, graduate students are attending classes and writing research to continue their academic work and may have interest in producing debate-based research. However, without the tools ready to make debate-based research a reality, many graduate student debate coaches move to other fields of research for their publications.

With this in mind, the establishment of mentoring programs within debate for graduate students to meet with experienced debate faculty, to discuss concepts for debate research, and to learn how to apply methodological designs to potential debate-centered research projects could turn the tide toward a massive output in debate research that helps not only the activity as a whole but also our graduate students and new coaches who deserve this assistance because of what they already do for the debate community.

Debate is also well suited to create time for these mentorships to meet, since tournaments provide a ready-made forum. We propose a mentorship program that meets frequently throughout the debate season at tournaments during a designated debate round. We suggest that full-time coaches increase their own judging commitments to provide their graduate students a round off to attend these colloquiums. The positive results of mentorship programs within academic settings on research production is well documented (Bolsen et al., 2019; Chapman & Wilkerson, 2020; Chaudhuri & Simoni, 2018; DeForge et al., 2019; Moffett, 2021; Turner, 2015, Vacek et al., 2021). The creation of this program could also be a future area of debate research about the value of debate research mentorships.

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5

On Standardizing Assessment and External Review of Debate and Forensics Teams

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From the early 1980s, higher education has turned to assessment to manage increased financial pressures and accountability concerns (Backlund et al., 2010; Morreale, 2007; Tucker, 1994). Despite this turn, communication programs lack standardized assessment practices (Morreale et al., 2010) and tend to emphasize faculty rather than programmatic assessment for debate programs (e.g., Louden, 2010). Lack of national assessment guidelines for debate and forensics creates inconsistent criteria for evaluation and undermines meaningful interprogrammatic comparisons. Many debate programs, already faced with budget cuts in response to the projected declines in student enrollment (Campion, 2020; Hoover, 2020), now face additional cuts or elimination in wake of the pressure that an estimated $180 billion in pandemic-related costs placed on higher education (UNC Kenan Institute, 2021; Whitford, 2021). In this context, debate programs must embrace programmatic assessment data to evidence their value to colleges and universities. Because reliable, accessible assessment guidelines are essential to the future health and sustainability of academic debate (see Partlow-Lefevre, 2012), we recommend a basic tripartite method for internal program assessment and the establishment of a national system for external review.

Implementing Assessment of Debate and Forensics Programs in Higher Education

Debate program assessment asks "whether students have acquired the skills, knowledge, and competencies" sought in debate (Stassed et al., 2001). Embedding assessment practices into everyday debate activities evidences the success of a debate program—beyond wins or losses—and provides a means for consistent improvement. Ongoing assessment cycles allow administrators to identify goals, to gather evidence, to evaluate evidence, and to plan and implement programmatic adjustments (Massa & Kasimatis, 2017). Notably, adjustments can include refining or even completely changing goals considering new information. Working to embed assessment as part of the normal operation of a program makes program assessment more manageable and builds an easily shared data set and evidence of excellence for the program.

The first step to successfully establishing a coherent review of a program involves clearly establishing the goals of a debate program (e.g., competitive success, civic participation). Once a program establishes institutionally aligned goals, assessment of evidence related to those goals, and reflexivity around them, becomes possible (Rudick et al., 2018). Proactive assessment should be embedded so that program administrators can collect evidence and documentation as part of the normal, ongoing activity of a forensics program rather than on a post hoc basis (see Lain & Anderson-Lain, 2021). Yearly internal review generates data for comprehensive programmatic evaluations every five to ten years.

Currently, most debate assessment is conducted on both an ad hoc and a post hoc basis, without clear guidelines and often in response to an exigency placing a program under the administrative microscope. The goal of assessment standardization for different debate programs works toward a process in which outside reviewers with expertise can offer proactive feedback, advice, and advocacy. A culture of programmatic assessment and external review, in good times and in bad, can provide programs with evidence to sustain and improve themselves.

In this proposal, we outline a conceptual system that facilitates assessment of debate and forensics programs. Faculty members are probably familiar with the teaching, scholarship, and service triptych that is the basis of faculty evaluation. Adapting this system, we propose a three-part standard for evaluation of debate and forensics programs to provide focused internal and external assessment. These prongs are (1) student learning outcomes (SLO), (2) service and community engagement, and (3) intercollegiate representation and team activities. Whether programs are administered by faculty, lecturer, or professional positions, the tripartite approach to conceptualizing the programmatic offerings of a forensics team offers useful standards for evaluation and improvement. The following sections should be taken as possibilities, and no team should expect to use or perform excellently in all areas.

Student Learning Outcomes

Coaching and mentoring students are the primary, essential activities for most successful intercollegiate debate programs. The relative strength of instructional design and coaching can be measured best, qualitatively or quantitatively, through SLOs. Educating debate team members includes skill development. Program directors should implement an ongoing assessment to measure targeted SLOs that align with institutional priorities, specifically missions and goals (see Partlow-Lefevre, 2012). When designing assessment, debate programs can choose to focus on key debate SLOs that are aligned with the National Communication Association (NCA) and American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) SLOs. Key AAC&U- and NCA-aligned SLOs include oral communication, critical thinking, information literacy, civic engagement, intercultural knowledge and competence, and ethics (AAC&U, 2014; Lain & Anderson-Lain, 2021; Mello et al., 2016; National Communication Association, 2015). For details of each SLO and its alignment with national organizations, see chapter 3 in this volume.

As programs tailor their debate SLOs to their individual needs and mandates, directors may wish to assess one or more of the following: critical thinking (Allen et al., 1999; Colbert, 1995; Dundes, 2001; Garrett et al., 1996; Rai, 2011), information literacy (D'Angelo & Maid, 2004; Natalle & Crowe; 2013; Samson, 2010; Walsh, 2009; Weaver & Pier, 2010), media literacy (Hallaq, 2016; Koltay, 2011; Scharrer, 2002; Schilder & Redmond, 2019), research skills (Ivanitskaya et al., 2004; Smith & Smith, 2018a, 2018b; Stokking et al., 2004), leadership (Floyd, 2006; Maddy & Rosenbaum, 2018; Mazzetto, 2019), and oral communication competency (Cooper & Sietman, 2016; Cooper et al., 2021; Cooper, 2011; Kennedy, 2007).

Service and Community Engagement

Debate teams often engage the community and provide service to their universities and broader communities. Service and engagement activities may vary and should be tracked and documented. Public debates include a nondebate audience and occur in a variety of formats, whether virtual or live events. Strong evidence of successful public debates includes advertising posters, programs, video or audio recordings, lists of participants noting interdisciplinary collaboration, or evidence of audience involvement, such as online poll results, number of live-stream views, or attendance documentation. Similarly, Debate Across the Curriculum (DAC) initiatives include interdisciplinary collaboration on campus, encouraging other disciplines to incorporate debate in their curricula. DAC has significant educational benefits (Bellon, 2006; Iberri-Shea, 2017; Lundberg, 2007; Rai, 2011) and occurs successfully in many disciplines (Bensley et al., 2010; Camp & Schnader, 2010; Garrett et al., 1996; Green & Klug, 1990; Gregory & Holloway, 2005; Roy & Macchiette, 2005). Participation in student activity or recruitment fairs, as well as collaboration with other campus offerings, allows debate teams the opportunity to infuse debate into the life of the university, expand the impact of debate, and increase the number of students served. In addition, alumni engagement allows teams to stay connected with past members, helps fundraising, and cultivates a network of support for a program, particularly if conducted on a yearly basis.

Outside the host institution, encouraging students to serve as coaches or judges at local high school competitions establishes important connections and develops leadership skills among students. While students can be trained to coach and mentor less experienced students in a variety of ways (Pierce, 2003), students with debate leadership opportunities will be better equipped as competitors and teammates. Finally, director or coach service to debate organizations is an important way to give back to the communities in which their teams participate. From hosting tournaments to serving on committees, taking on leadership roles is critical to the health of debate.

Intercollegiate Representation and Team Activities

Debate teams participate in a variety of activities both within and outside intercollegiate debate. Tournament competition is the most recognized of these activities, but a strong debate program will have representation across a variety of different contexts. Team administrators should document all forms of intercollegiate representation and team activities.

Travel requires extensive advance planning and is a formative experience for students and coaches. The time and effort involved in the substantive work of making reservations (e.g., airfare, vehicle rental, lodging) and coordinating details cannot be overstated (McDonald, 2001). Competition includes coaching and mentoring students and is an activity that tends to receive a lot of focus. Competition at tournaments, and often at specific tournaments, is key to building a nationally competitive program (Panetta, 1990). Team meetings and debate practice prepare students for tournament competition and are primary locations for coaching and mentoring (Preston & Bailey, 2016). International events like hosting international debate teams or traveling internationally for competition enrich a program but are a significant investment. Opportunities include international exchanges through the Committee for International Discussion and Debate (CIDD) of NCA; the World Universities Debating Championship (WUDC), the largest international debate competition (see Llano, 2012); and the iDebate Dreamers Academy in Rwanda (Voth, 2021). Team-building activities and events strengthen group dynamics on a team and may occur within the context of regular meetings and practices but may also be social events. A particularly significant component of team activities centers on communicating and holding students accountable for team policies, including but not limited to expectations for travel and tournament competition, harassment training, debate research, team meetings, and practice round participation.

Expanding External Review

Building on Rowland and Atchison's (2010) recommendation for creating a certified team of debate critics (pp. 90–91), the American Forensic Association should develop an Editorial Program Review Board (AFA-EPRB) to certify external reviewers (p. 68). An AFA-EPRB could be modeled on the NCA's Performance Studies National Review Board, since debate similarly "embraces a wide array of topics, research methods, and modes of presentation and publication" (National Review Board, 2016). This creates a complex array of programmatic elements that are best reviewed by certified representatives of professional organizations. Like an editorial board for a journal, an AFA-EPRB would provide a set of debate experts with different subspecialties to review a range of debate and forensics programs and ensure consistent, responsive review processes capable of creating deliverables.

The AFA-EPRB should provide two primary types of external review, including review of annual materials and intermittent on-site program review. A combination of these measures can enhance internal assessment measures and leverage the authority of national debate organizations such as the AFA to provide clear and consistent assessment of programmatic quality. It is important to note that external review should be available to all debate programs regardless of their structural position in any given university setting. Whether a program is housed in student affairs and directed by a non-academic professional or in a communication department and directed by a graduate student, lecturer, or tenure-track faculty member, external review is an important component of quality assurance for the program.

External peer review of annual evaluation materials (e.g., portfolios, yearly program reports, audiovisual materials, survey results, pretest-posttest) should be a regular part of the debate and forensics program review but should also be optional and available on demand. External reviewers should submit a letter of review considering professional standards and outcomes as established by the AFA or other relevant professional debate organizations and institutional review policies and procedures.

Formal external program reviews should include a committee of two or three AFA-EPRB-certified reviewers and should occur every five to ten years. Formal external reviews can engage university administrators, facilitate program growth, and leverage resources. The review process includes the following: identification of goals for review, identification of appropriate reviewers, a self-study, amassing key information from yearly reviews, a site visit, and production of a report by external reviewers. Site visits should include prior review of portfolios and self-study materials, tours of facilities and physical spaces that support the program, and stakeholder meetings with current students, alumni, coaches, department chairs, deans, and other appropriate administrators. When the final report is submitted, it should become the basis for midterm programmatic strategic planning.

Conclusion

Assessment of debate programs has been primarily ad hoc and post hoc, requiring coaches and directors to scramble to design their own systems of assessment. In this chapter, we offer a consistent, useful formula for how debate programs could improve their own practice and communicate the benefits of debate to outside stakeholders. By utilizing student learning outcomes, service and community engagement, and intercollegiate representation and team activities, programs can facilitate both internal yearly reviews and larger systematic external review. The establishment of an AFA-EPRB, consisting of qualified professionals, would facilitate proactive assessment practices and allow programs to communicate their strengths to stakeholders. Further, it would provide a standardized support system for assessment of debate programs in the United States that could encourage growth and stability for speech and debate programs in challenging times.

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6

Data Curation

CHALLENGES AND A PROPOSAL

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In today's assessment-driven funding environment, debate's laudable reputation is often not enough to convince administrators, students, funders, or the wider public. Moreover, those who make their careers in debate often struggle to find the research opportunities and scholarly recognition needed for tenure, promotion, and other career advancements. Research on debate as an argument community is fragmented. While we have a multitude of data points, it is not organized, and most research is done on a "one-off" basis and discontinued after that. Tabroom and the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA) point system database contain huge amounts of potentially useful data but do not include key fields and permissions needed for most research purposes. Moreover, what data they contain is intended only for tournament or program administration and is not usefully visualized or readily accessible, even to debate professionals.

Over the decades, a significant body of quality debate research has accumulated in a variety of scholarly journals, books, and websites. From the 1960s through the 1980s, research about debate theory and rhetorical argumentation produced substantial research literature, and more recently, critical theory and performance have established a body of scholarly work. There is, however, a comparatively small body of empirical literature. Even when such studies are conducted, peer reviewed, and published, their survey instruments, coding schemes, and data sets are often not available to other researchers for later use. These patterns highlight the need for a centralized set of debate research incentives, data protocols, and legal permissions and more publication outlets.

Many universities, debate programs, and school districts have conducted internal assessment studies, but they are rarely published or even posted on public websites. Many college and high school coaches have haphazard collections of research articles, editorials, and testimonials about the benefits of debate or outcomes for their alumni, but the information is typically tailored to a specific program and not made public. Individual case studies have been conducted but are not typically published or peer reviewed. Internal qualitative and quantitative tools are often created for assessment or benchmarking, but those tools are rarely validated externally or published. Moreover, most of the extant empirical work has been created by K–12 institutions, school districts, and nonprofits. As a result, most of that work has not been published, and the data sets are not available for use.

Debate Argumentation Research Clearinghouse

Given the current, crucial importance of debate argumentation at all levels of education and its essential role in healthy public discourse in democratic societies, there is an urgent need for a debate research clearinghouse. The goal of the clearinghouse would be (1) to collect in one accessible, searchable site, all the currently available scholarship on debate argumentation and its outcomes, (2) to make previously unpublished work available for peer and public review, (3) to facilitate future research on the outcomes of academic debate, and (4) to provide all the materials needed to promote debate as an engine for excellence in education and public discourse.

Therefore, we propose creating the Debate Argumentation Research Clearinghouse (DARC), which aims to establish a single, accessible, searchable website for research, theory, and data on debate. We use the phrase "debate argumentation" to broaden the term "debate" beyond the extracurricular competitive activity and yet situate it as a scholarly subset within the larger fields of rhetoric, argumentation, and the social science of argument and interpersonal conflict. The term therefore includes the competitive activity but also includes debate across the curriculum, debate pedagogy, debate theory, debate critical and performative theory, and the intersections of debate with its many adjacent fields. DARC would include information about all types of debate, formats, and levels. It would make the collected information available for use by everyone: coaches and administrators as well as researchers and other professionals, with restrictions on certain data to those who are conducting legitimate scholarly research. The project would start by collecting existing completed research articles, books, bibliographies, and best-practice resource materials. Later, it would add public data sets and a process for gaining the legal permissions needed for researchers to conduct their own analyses of existing data to produce new and more specific studies.

Naturally, the exact design and content of the clearinghouse site will require revision as interested stakeholders provide their input. However, to help visualize the project, this chapter provides a principled justification, draft framework, and actionable plan to put the project in motion. The site would need to be curated in an accessible format using a design style and vocabulary appropriate for researchers and administrators, debate and nondebate professionals alike. We anticipate that researchers from adjacent fields would use the site for literature reviews, meta-analyses, content analyses, and data manipulation. We also hope the site will be a resource for anyone advocating for debate and for potential funding institutions and administrators looking for information about the possible benefits that debate may provide their institutions.

The basic design might include the following four major categories:

1. Clear and compelling statement describing the discipline of debate, including (a) distinguishing debate argumentation activities from other forms of argumentation, (b) scholarship standards within the discipline of debate, and (c) the benefits of debate argumentation for students, educational institutions, communities, and the broader world
2. Curation of existing, completed research articles, books, studies, or other media
3. Visualization of existing data, which is not currently available and/or accessible in useful research formats
4. Best-practice resources for both debate professionals and researchers, including (a) best-practice materials about pedagogy and practices by coaches, judges, and forensic administrators, (b) sample materials for teams, programs, and courses, (c) uniform standards and best practices for researchers in the discipline

Detailed Proposal and Logistical Issues

ESTABLISHING A RESEARCH CURATION WEBSITE

Establishing the site will require answering myriad logistical questions. Among these are identifying a host organization and IT host institution; creating site design and specialized coding adaptations; issuing calls for crowd-sourcing materials and submissions; developing governance structure, sustainable funding, and staffing; securing copyright permissions; collecting and adapting appropriate IRB protocols, legal permissions, documents, and sample language; and publicizing the site to encourage use. A variety of more technical challenges will also need to be addressed, such as converting files to accessible, searchable formats; extracting content categories for navigation; and coding the documents for research and indexing. Finally, we aspire for many of these resources to eventually be added to the prominent commercial databases commonly used by academic libraries.

We recommend (1) creating an implementation team to set up the initial site and begin the process of resolving the issues included here and (2) establishing a permanent American Forensic Association (AFA) committee to oversee the continuing governance and administration of the clearinghouse site. In creating the permanent committee, we recommend the AFA issue a call for members and situate the committee appropriately within the AFA governance structure. The AFA should also consider whether the committee should be AFA only or function as a joint committee with other stakeholder organizations, such as the National Debate Tournament, Cross Examination Debate Association, National Parliamentary Debate Association, National Speech and Debate Association, National Urban Debate League, and so on.

Below, we propose a draft system of research categories that could be used to index research and to create functional annotated bibliographies and full-text documents in a searchable format. These draft categories are only preliminary and incomplete and will require additions and revisions before the site is launched. Nevertheless, just starting the process of creating a universal set of research categories is crucial to organizing and accessing the research and to defining debate argumentation as a scholarly discipline.

PUBLIC DATA SETS

One of the most complex issues in establishing the clearinghouse website is how to ensure that debate research data sets are available for other researchers to use in future research. On the data-collection end, this requires building consensus around a variety of systems to make data more uniform, useful, and accessible. All researchers should agree to make their data sets publicly available to other researchers for replication and future study. Likewise, creating a system in Tabroom and other sites for a unique anonymous identifier for each person (debater, judge, coach) would help smooth both IRB permissions and the ability to later merge or manipulate data sets.

On the data-access side, many policies and logistical issues need resolution. Where should the public data sets reside? How will the submission, access, and citation process work? What, if any, limits should exist on who can use the data for what purposes? Many such models exist, across many disciplines, such as Unipro UGENE (n.d.) for biological data, the International Monetary Fund's country data set (2021), and the US Census public database (2021). Creating a new site would offer advantages for tailoring the site to specialized needs of this field and for more quickly segmenting data into categories that our field considers relevant. But there are many advantages to simply joining an existing data-sharing site rather than creating a new site or hiring a commercial firm to create it. One of the existing options might be simply joining the Harvard Dataverse (Harvard University, 2021), a massive social science database with over 100,000 existing data sets. An alternative model is the University of Minnesota's GEMS data site for agroinformatics, which requires standardization of submissions and cleans and normalizes the data before posting on the site (University of Minnesota, 2021). The clearinghouse implementation group will need to review these options, collect opinions, and determine the final answers to these questions.

CURATING COMPLETED, EXISTING RESEARCH BY CATEGORY

Collection and curation of existing published research on debate practices and outcomes should be among the less complicated tasks in creating the clearinghouse. We envision a centralized location where researchers and advocates are guided to the resources that already exist on their research topics—in essence, the research that forms the core of any good literature review. This could take the form of simple bibliographies, annotated bibliographies, and/or links to the location of the full-text articles. While much of this research has been published through traditional sources like scholarly journals and conference presentations, it will also be necessary to encompass informal venues like debate handbooks, summer institute materials, unpublished works, and works-in-progress. Collecting these resources on a large scale could prove difficult, but crowdsourcing could aid in obtaining some of the more inaccessible materials.

The categories of research that we consider central to the mission of the clearinghouse include the following:

1. *Student outcomes*: including research on academic outcomes, the impact of debaters in the classroom, service learning and civic engagement, alumni outcomes, social and emotional learning, and research on debate across the curriculum
2. *Assessment methods and tools*: research on methodologies for conducting assessment as well as the available data, instruments, and examples, including student, faculty, and program assessment
3. *Diversity, equity, and inclusion*: research on current trends in debate and how debate practices impact diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals and objectives
4. *Debate theory and critical literature*: the wealth of research written on debate argumentation theory as well as critical analyses of debate argumentation practices

BEST PRACTICES IN DEBATE ARGUMENTATION

Finally, the research clearinghouse could also be a repository for a variety of resources that bear the AFA "stamp of approval" for best practices. The goals of such a repository would be twofold: providing guidance for researchers and program administrators and providing the institutional authority to support professionals in the field. The list of possible resources is too long to describe in detail here, but we envision a few broad categories: (1) resources for researchers, (2) resources for directing and coaching, and (3) resources for conducting assessment.

First, resources for researchers would promote a systematic approach to data publication. These could potentially include survey instruments, experiment designs, instruction on IRB practices and sample documentation, direction to grant support and other funding opportunities, and information about publications that focus on debate and argumentation. A major priority for these resources should be creating a common set of practices and a vocabulary that enables researchers to share their research more easily and collaborate more effectively with one another.

Second, resources for directing and coaching would provide support and direction for program administrators, with a focus on resources for newer and less experienced coaches and administrators. This includes instructional materials to aid in teaching debate practices and skills to students, as well as for judging and providing constructive oral critiques. It also includes materials that help directors understand and meet the challenges of administering a program—for example, resources to advocate for funding and support. There should also be materials to help coaches and directors understand how to best promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in their programs.

Last, the repository should include AFA recommendations for best practices and support for faculty, student, and program assessment. It can provide a variety of official documents including, for example, a scholarly statement concerning the definition and criteria for quality research in the discipline of debate, the criteria for evaluating debate faculty and staff positions, and other information to help guide promotion and tenure decisions. Additionally, there could be great value in publishing debate-specific student learning objective rubrics and sample student evaluations. Finally, the repository could include model program assessments and publicly available data for comparison/evaluation.

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Part II

New Roles for National Organizations

7

Better College Policy Debate Governance

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Introduction

Declining participation in Cross Examination Debate Association and National Debate Tournament policy debate has created governance challenges, but these challenges have been partly mitigated by a handful of individuals devoting significant time to governance. Reliance on a few diligent individuals may not be a durable strategy. This chapter explores participation from a governance perspective, laying out the data on participation decline before offering proposals for governance to mitigate and reverse participation declines, short of dramatic steps like reducing NDT entries or expanding third team participation at the NDT. These governance proposals include participation benchmarks, leveraging alumni support, conferences, evidence-based public debates, service, and specific proposals for organizational interaction, including the American Forensic Association.

Current Concerns with the Policy Debate Landscape

PARTICIPATION IS DECLINING

Much recent discussion at organizational meetings has highlighted the decline in participation in intercollegiate policy debate. Both CEDA and NDT leadership have initiated working groups to try to assess and reverse this trend. It is important, therefore, to assess data to understand the dynamics of the decline in participation to plan effective solutions.

Measurements of program-level participation in CEDA/NDT governance reveals that participation has been in decline for at least 20 years. Specifically, NDT memberships have declined 47% from 2001 to 2021. In at least 12 of the years in this data set, membership declined; four years measured no change, and only four years showed an increase in memberships from the previous year. Schools earning NDT points fell from 142 in 2001 to 68 in 2019. CEDA topic voters fell from 70 in 2008 to 52 in 2021 (Vega, 2021).

Measurement of within-program participation indicates that institutions that continue to participate have, on average, fewer students participating. Measurements of NDT district qualifying tournament participation shows that schools averaged 1.33 entries in the NDT qualification process in 2008, and that average has declined to 1.21 in 2020. This measure controls for large squads because each school can only enter two teams in this process. A decline of 0.1 teams per school, then, represents a substantial decline in intraprogram density (Vega, 2022). While the national decline in program and teams is supported by both data and anecdotal evidence, further research should focus on the specific causes of decline in each year. Specifically, the dynamic of regional program density appears to be a large factor in program decline.

Data suggest that participation decline is not a recent phenomenon. Anecdotally, both CEDA and NDT were experiencing declining participation prior to the topic merger of 1996. The merger created the appearance of more participation as more schools and teams were participating in the same activity. However, participation continued to decline to the present. The consistency of the decline suggests that proximate causes of decline are more likely manifestations of a structural dynamic. Participation has decreased in economic booms and busts, across a wide plethora of topic types and subjects and throughout changes in argument development.

It could be useful to compare the competitive activity of debate to a competitive market. Without regulation and/or countercyclical pressure, a market rewards concentration and consolidation. As regional debate organizations merged to form national competitive fields, the rewards of debate consolidated, as did the efficiencies of larger and concentrated debate tournaments. Resource disparities among schools in the form of budget, coaching, and geography become an even larger factor as concentration increases. Within a competitive market, states can counter consolidation and concentration through regulation of a market, but intercollegiate debate has relied largely on an unregulated model.

Understanding program decline as a manifestation of the structural dynamic of a competitive activity reveals several important factors in trying to counteract the decline. It is unlikely that "perfecting" the rules of the activity will draw more participation because the pressure to consolidate will overwhelm the benefits. It is also highly unlikely that proposals that increase choice will have a positive effect. Instead, proposals that clear the path for institutions to choose affiliations and travel probably exacerbate existing antagonisms related to program resources and geographical advantages. Internally, programs will be forced to spend more resources on fewer students, which diminishes institutional and alumni bases of support. Proposals to counter the structural tendency of a market consolidation and monopolization need to offer rewards that predominantly counteract consolidation. Proposals should encourage regional debate opportunities and dependencies between programs that promote solidarity instead of individualism.

WE LACK CLEAR METRICS AND BENCHMARKS

Although there is general acceptance that today's CEDA/NDT community is smaller than in the past, disagreements remain about what type of participation declined, when it declined, and the reasons for that decline. It might seem obvious, but even a quick conversation reveals important and deep divisions about whether the primary unit of analysis should be the number of subscribing programs, the number of teams at an open national tournament, the total number of students, or some other measure. The importance of these questions requires the community to have some commonly appreciated metrics to serve as the starting point for these conversations. Combined with the improvements in publicly available data collection on Tabroom, it is now possible to offer specific annual measurements to serve as benchmarks in these discussions. Once the community has a series of agreed-on numerical standards, these measurements can facilitate discussions about appropriate next steps to address those specific participation trends.

Within our working group, we discussed that although there is no single universal standard, the community would benefit from a commonly accepted metric to assess how individual programs are recognized on their home campus. In other words, common standards would indicate CEDA/NDT community assessment of participation. Differentiating participation from competitive success allows the community to more narrowly designate that a program is "active" without making claims about program's competitive success.

Our working group proposed two benchmarks: one for student engagement and one for staffing. The student benchmarks would allow the community to simply determine the degree to which individual programs are engaging several students across the season. This standard would utilize the community's standard of 24 completed rounds as its definition of an engaged student.*

We believe that this data could be applied both to the current season and retroactively to past seasons. The community could examine a noncompetitive standard that asked how substantial the student participation was at a specific institution. Knowing that each program has its own unique experiences and situations, it would also allow the community to identify objective changes in student performance.

The working group also discussed the utility of allowing the community to benchmark coaching positions. This is admittedly less historically visible in community data, but working with member schools to generate this information would provide the community another lens to assess

* We discussed 24 and 32 as useful rounds floors for this standard. There are reasons for each, but the essential part is that whichever standard is employed, the community recognizes that this is understood as the minimum notion for a student actively participating in that season.

Table 7.1. Student Engagement Benchmark

Tier	Number of students with 24 rounds
5	10 or more
4	6–9
3	4–5
2	2–3
1	0–1

Table 7.2. Coaching Position Benchmark

Tier	# of coaches, full-time equivalent
5	50 or more
4	35–49
3	20–34
2	10–19
1	1–9

institutional participation. Because this data would need to be gathered from member institutions, it is important that categories reflect meaningful types of professional staffing. Suggested categories include full-time (faculty or staff who are considered full-time salaried and benefited employees of their institution; 10 points), half-time (graduate students with a partial commitment to debate or part-time coaches making over $10,000 per year; 5 points), and tournament or "weekender" (1 point per weekend) coaches who assist primarily for or at tournaments beyond simply judging. Thus, a program with one active faculty coach, three graduate assistants, and three weekends of hired alumni coaching would have 28 coach points (10 + 5 + 7), which indicate tier 3. This system could enable easy external counting, but a program could self-report modified numbers (e.g., if a full-time employee considered themselves a half-time coach or if an alumni volunteered hours like a graduate assistant coach).

With these and any other benchmarks, the community could engage in annual review of changes in programmatic participation. A simple stop-light (green-yellow-red) scorecard could be produced indicating green lights for those programs maintaining or expanding participation (being at an equal or higher tier), yellow lights for any program reducing its participation a single tier, or a red light for any program reducing two or more tiers in a single season. The objective data could also motivate organizational leadership to engage that individual coach and express concern and desire to assist. Because these are explicitly not quality or performance benchmarks, they offer organizations a safe way to engage their members' schools about the health of their programs without making judgments that could fracture relationships.

SERVICE IS UNEVEN

A significant problem in our activity is that a short list of the same people is doing significant service for multiple organizations. We should set a threshold for a significant service unit (SSU) at 25 hours and ask organizations to self-report individuals by name meeting that threshold. Although it would be great to identify the individuals with five or ten SSUs across the community, the primary goal should be to monitor the number of *different* individuals reaching the threshold, as well as to encourage most full-time coaches to aspire toward a certain threshold. It may take some time to develop an acceptable baseline.

Service, in this context, does not include coaching at any level, hosting or instructing at summer camps, running a tournament, writing topic papers, or service to one's home campus. Instead, service would be defined as elected or appointed organization service, including committee work, but could include widely recognized community service initiatives outside an organizational context. Gray areas might include conference work related to debate, compiling rankings, or managing wiki work beyond one's program. Each organization's president or appointee should report a list of names and SSU count to the AFA by May 1, and topic process should roll into the following year's report. SSUs should not be considered automatic for positions, but self-reports should be generally accepted.

The AFA Should Play a Stronger Governance Role

We advocate for a stronger leadership role for the AFA in serving as an "umbrella organization for coordination of activities and professional goals of the various forensic organizations" (Parson & Harris, 2000, p. 66). Founded in 1949, the AFA was created to foster cooperation and reduce redundancy between separate collegiate forensics organizations (Klumpp, 2000). In a fragmented and overlapping competitive forensics landscape, the AFA can act as a fair and honest broker between organizations and provide academic legitimacy to our competitive activities.

The AFA is well situated to advise, coordinate, and manage overlap and division between other organizations. Despite sponsoring the NDT and NST, the organization's leadership, standing committees, and membership represent almost all other debate and speech organizations. Both national championships have their own separate governance bodies, leaving the AFA in an advisory and separate role (Parson & Harris, 2000). This allows the AFA to credibly position itself to be an impartial broker between competing organizations and formats (Ziegelmueller & Baron, 2000).

The AFA's connection to the National Communication Association (NCA) keeps program directors and communication scholars connected and maintains the scholarly credibility of competitive forensic activities. Although not as many competitive programs are housed in communication departments as they once were, AFA's strong relationship with NCA through convention programming, cosponsorship of the Alta conference on argumentation, and sponsorship of one of the top scholarly journals in argumentation anchor our activity within a field of scholars who understand and support the broad educational and professional aims of promoting argumentation and advocacy and oral communication (Ziegelmueller & Baron, 2000). This relationship gives the AFA legitimacy in advocating for the educational value of competitive forensics.

With this central and credible position, the AFA can coordinate professional and program development and the creation of instructional materials that are often duplicated by competing organizations. AFA standing committees on educational practice, professional development, and research are natural homes for the coordination of these activities. In addition, there are several noncompetitive activities that the AFA can sponsor and coordinate, such as presidential debate watches, a centralized clearinghouse on civic and public debates, professional assessment and credentialing, and positive video and social media messaging.

We seek to return the AFA to a stronger central position within the competitive forensic landscape. As past AFA president Scott Nobles and other AFA leaders noted in 1974, "AFA must serve, and endeavor to unite, the entire forensic community. AFA should not only serve the interest and needs of varied forensic programs; it should exert leadership in unifying the efforts of these somewhat divided elements of the forensic community" (quoted in Klumpp, 2000, p. 22). Given its academic and professional mission and connection to several affiliate organization and an academic discipline, the AFA has several natural advantages in this type of leadership role. We outline several specific suggestions on how the AFA can serve the larger policy debate and forensics community.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Several coaches still operate under the traditional model of a tenure-track director. At a minimum, AFA should circulate to any such coach a list of possible external evaluators with a knowledge of coaching and its demands, as well as outlets that previously tenured coaches have found useful in building their résumés. Many pretenure coaches succeed only because of mentoring, and a committee focused on professional development could provide a far wider mentoring network to help avoid surprises during the tenure process. Ideally, such a committee could seek to reach every graduate teaching assistant coach, and offer outreach to any interested undergraduate, to provide more information for prospective future coaches. The current CEDA/NDT community is more diverse than many institutions, which could allow AFA to market the creation of new programs as a diversity initiative.

The ratio of tenured faculty coaches to other coaches has declined, suggesting there may be a place for professional development initiatives for AFA to support coaches beyond the tenure track. The 2021 AFA Debate Convention covered several topics of interest to any coach, including funding, budgeting, foundation, hiring practices, assessment, recruitment, campus service, missions, publicity, annual work, team communication, and risk management. Each of these, and more, could be converted to a self-paced short course, perhaps linked to a certification process including a content quiz. By lending its reputation to such an effort, AFA could facilitate coach education (available to clubs and debaters as well) while creating a mechanism for coaches to demonstrate their skills and roles to their current campus and future employers. Some of these short courses could be literally built from recordings from the 2021 convention, although a separate publication with a video component might entice peer-reviewed submissions.

ALUMNI ADVOCACY NETWORK

Nearly anyone involved in debate coaching knows of a few successful CEDA/NDT alumni. Most probably know of more successful alumni from their own program's history. While CEDA/NDT debate evolves quickly and not all alumni appreciate all evolutions, it is likely that an overwhelming majority of these alumni strongly support policy debate and recall it as a significant formative activity from their undergraduate years. In most cases, reaching out to such alumni for donations is properly the purview of their alma mater, not the larger debate community. However, there are different requests that organized governance might make to such alumni.

Since debate produces passionate and persuasive advocates, it is likely that its alumni who have left the activity could be effective advocates, if those who were making the requests did so in a way respectful of their time. For example, with Zoom or similar technology, an alumnae or alumnus could make a short video that identifies their memory of debate, perhaps in a way that foregrounds topics, arguments, and evidence and traces it to their experiences after graduation. Such a video would be better in the two- to five-minute range, although if they wanted to make different arguments, they could record multiple videos.

Governance could play a role in soliciting such videos, in the context of a publicity campaign, as well as distributing them. Any organization could perform this role, but it would be particularly well suited for the AFA, which could release a new video every week or month via its social media accounts and encourage programs and individuals currently in debate to disseminate and publicize them.

This sort of a campaign can be more effective if the target audience is considered, and there are several possible audiences. First, administrators who might have influence over budget, staffing, and resource decisions could be sent emails by the current coach (or students or alumni, in case of a club structure). This audience needs to understand that debate is a high-impact academic practice that often results in graduation, graduate degrees, and success across a range of fields. Such decision-makers have many competing priorities to balance in making resource decisions, but if they view even one video that resonates with their values as an educator, it could have a significant material effect on debate opportunities for students who may not yet be old enough to debate in middle or high school.

Second, another audience is debate alumni. Many programs today exist solely because well-placed alumni have exerted pressure and sometimes money during a coaching transition, when a debate program is most vulnerable. Alumni inside the academy often protect debate programs from competing pressures and occasional adverse publicity and sometimes take the lead in creating programs or supporting needed resources. There are probably many alumni who could do more in 2022 and beyond than they have done in the years proceeding, and a positive alumni campaign might spur other alumni to do more. Debate may need more hands on deck coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic than ever before.

A third possible audience is prospective debaters, with or without high school experience. Students choosing schools without programs and hoping to establish them may get some wind at their back knowing they have support from various places. Students trying to decide whether to join or remain with a program might find a single message of reassurance enough to get them to the first tournament.

Finally, coaches have considerable incentives to focus on preparing their current teams for the next tournament, but a well-constructed campaign might encourage a longer view. Similarly, thinking about why colleges decide to spend resources on debate may change team practices to align more closely with the values of the constituents, hopefully without diluting the experience. The evolving focus toward sustainability concerns over the past few years has been refreshing, but there are still many audiences to reach even among current coaches.

Such a campaign begins with organization—a committee sanctioned by the AFA might be able to solicit contact information to locate hundreds of alumni prospects for this sort of request. Some of those alumni might even have strategic messaging experience, which can improve the campaign. Once gathered, this contact information should be kept because there may be future campaigns, possibly even targeted letter-writing campaigns, which might benefit from people willing to write a letter and then adjust the address and perhaps a few words to adapt it to the situation. We should not expect such alumni to become AFA members, although some might, but perhaps an occasional email update on AFA activities will invite a greater sense of connection.

Finally, there is a no requirement for such an approach to be limited to CEDA/NDT debate. The same model could work for individual events, particularly if led by people with considerable individual events experience. Other debate organizations affiliated with AFA could similarly benefit and demonstrate the importance of coding the alumni advocacy list by format, school, graduation date, postdebate career, and contact information.

PROMOTING EVIDENCE-BASED DEBATE FOR PUBLIC AUDIENCES

Debate programs, especially those specializing in policy debate, face pressure to offer accessible opportunities to a greater number of students. Students are increasingly reticent to participate in time-intensive competitions, and administrators challenge programs to justify their resources by serving more students. Stacked atop the long-standing challenge of explaining policy debate to external audiences, directors are diversifying their programming to adapt. For instance, directors have created or participate in the Atlantic Coast Conference Debate Championship (ACC Academic Consortium, n.d.), Pacific Northwest Debate (Western Debate Union, n.d.), and Social Justice Debates (n.d.), as three recent examples. While specifics differ, each emphasizes civic engagement and accessible, public-oriented communication. The AFA, with its professional-development-oriented mission, should respond by offering support and recognition of these efforts. We recommend the development of two community resources to promote evidence-based debate for public audiences.

First, the AFA should develop programmatic criteria to validate director and program effort in this area. Such standards should be flexible enough to allow directors room to innovate while ensuring that debate programming upholds AFA standards for student empowerment, oral advocacy, and research (American Forensic Association, 2018). Validation would have the added benefit of encouraging the development of accessible and rigorous programming by any forensics program, not only those geared toward college policy debate.

AFA's criteria for validation should promote student success in three areas: oral communication, critical thinking, and information literacy. Our rationale ties back to the unique mission of the organization and the imperative that debate programs face over the next several years. Communication, critical thinking, and information literacy represent the key "soft skills" that are highly sought by employers, administrators, and students (Dungy & Peck, 2019). These are the same skills that evidence-based college debate has long excelled in providing. They also ensure that debate programming upholds the mission of higher education. Anchoring debate innovation to student accessibility and specific learning outcomes ensures that debate remains academically rigorous at the college level.

Although specifics are best left to the organization, we recommend the AFA develop an accreditation process for evidence-based, publicly oriented debate programming. This could take the form of an application process. Following publication of specific benchmarks, program directors could submit an application and portfolio that outlines the format, teaching materials used, and examples of student work or evidence of learning. The organization could then validate director efforts by approving the application for that format or providing suggested revisions necessary before approval can be secured. The AFA may also wish to develop resources beyond format validation, such as national awards to recognize director achievement in promoting accessible yet rigorous evidence-based debate for public audiences. It should also encourage specific policy debate organizations to incentivize program participation in these efforts. However, the AFA and other organizations should take care to ensure that processes of program recognition of excellence emphasize student accessibility and educational outcomes, rather than competitive outcomes.

Second, the organization should serve as a clearinghouse for information about these alternative models of debate. Currently, there is a lack of nationwide information and understanding of what formats are currently offered, by whom, and how to get involved. The intercollegiate debate community often relies on established networks to share information, while experimental formats escape attention. The AFA website should thus serve as a hub for distributing general details. We recommend that the AFA establish uniform parameters for what information it will host, such as an event description, a website link, and contact information. The clearinghouse could include information about both formats that have been validated and those that have not. We recommend a process for directors to submit format information to the AFA for posting on its website to ease the burden of keeping track of developments throughout the debate community.

ORGANIZATIONAL INTERACTION

Another discussion point for the working group was that, despite widespread recognition of the challenges associated with organizational interactions, the current dynamic is far from efficient. Participants noted that many of the same individuals take on these roles across organizations, even as the organizational structures may inhibit these efforts. Many of the debate organizations were designed in a historical moment when they alone represented a collection of institutions. Today, however, professionals and institutions find themselves working across organizations to serve common goals. The optimal path ahead would be to adjust organizational scope to allow each to emphasize its unique expertise.

Participants noted that the current moment within academic debate is characterized by significant adaption and innovation. They expressed an interest in debate organizations finding ways to better coordinate in the service of supporting these innovations. They considered the ways in which organizations can help motivate and fuel specific competitive and programmatic interests. The right organizational adjustments could help programs innovate and demonstrate the kind of recognition that administrations seek to evaluate their debate programs. Reviewing the awards that each organization gives, for example, would be a valuable moment to ensure each award is specifically and distinctly tailored to support a specific set of values.

Rather than organizations operating from a legacy perspective about their goals, the participants suggested that debate organizations should revisit their organizational goals around the question "What can a debate organization do for you and your program?" Within that lens, organizations should be willing to narrow their scope of operations consistent with specific practices that they are uniquely best suited to achieve. Participants noted that organizations would be best served by reducing territorial approaches in favor of incentive structures that help programs innovate and sustain participation. The group recognized the importance of better coordination about tournament scheduling for all divisions but especially to ensure the presence of a viable novice debate calendar.

Participants noted that although there are distinctions between the high school and collegiate forensics communities, there are common goals within the National Speech and Debate Association's charter that encourage its advocacy for all speech and debate activities. These efforts include both public efforts to validate the calculus that an institution considers when supporting debate and providing the kind of direct training to help support new coaches. Participants noted that there is a parallel need for supporting the collegiate policy debate brand through wider communications. They noted the positive steps taken by specific organizations, such as sending public thank-you letters to tournament hosts. They commented that similar efforts could both proactively raise awareness and support for the brand of debate and provide a solid foundation for crisis communication efforts. These steps were considered collectively as noncompetitive steps that support programs and coaches.

Similarly, in a prior section of this report, the working group discusses the important role that organizations can play in normalizing participation expectations. Regardless of the specific metrics employed, organizations should emphasize ways to validate that participation and offer support for programs that are experiencing challenges. The group noted that greater attention is warranted to helping program directors seek support before their program faces a specific administrative crisis. The working group recognized that the wider competitive environment may disincentivize directors from seeking assistance from other colleagues. Trusted organizations may have a unique role to play in offering this kind of non-adversarial support, especially if the organizations could offer programs a set of prescreened and trusted advisors. These same advisors would also be an important resource for a range of institutional letter writing, including faculty and program reviews.

Two specific suggestions were raised to help the AFA, or any organization, better identify programs and coaches in need of support. One suggestion considered the designation of a "czar" to serve as a single point of contact whenever any of the organizations become aware of a program experiencing specific challenges. The group discussed how the current structures may inhibit programmatic support if only because there are so many diffuse governing bodies. The single individual could then help marshal the specific resources available across each organization. Additionally, the working group examined the feasibility of a brief program health survey.

Organizations collect dues largely as an accounting function, but the group also explored how this moment could provide an opportunity for the program leadership to check in with their organization. Encouraging coaches to complete a few short questions to assess their program's health regarding a couple of key indicators such as student participation, budget, administrative support, or coaching burnout would give the organizations a far more powerful understanding of their constituency.

The working group strongly recommended that the leadership of the respective organizations embrace more direct coordination. They noted how these service roles are significant and often fall disproportionately on specific members of the community. Coordination both reduces the expectations on any single individual and allows each organization to identify its greatest way to support its membership.

NDT Conferences Option

In this last section of the chapter, we detail some specific actions that could be taken by the NDT to change from a regional district model to a conference model of governance. We think these suggestions have value and hope they are carefully considered. However, these actions are not advanced as specific policy proposals because they have not been carefully developed and vetted. They are offered to instigate thinking about innovations in the NDT governance structure that are possible and needed. Our hope is that there is careful consideration of two factors. First, important governance innovations can be pursued as pilot projects or as additions to the existing NDT governance structure without necessitating a whole-scale revision of the existing structure. Second, because competitive goals are an important driver of decision-making within the NDT governance structure, those goals should be carefully considered and managed as part of any revision of that governance structure. Finally, we assume that conferences would need to achieve some benchmarks of program and team participation to receive either a voice in governance or qualifying bids to the National Debate Tournament.

The current National Debate Tournament governance structure creates substantial inequities regarding governance. Each NDT district receives one seat and one vote on the NDT Committee. However, participation rates vary widely between districts. During the 2020–2021 academic year, 15 schools in the District III area subscribed to the NDT, while District IV had two subscribers. Both districts received one seat and one vote on the NDT Committee. Given these representation inequalities, we suggest that the NDT Committee be organized by conferences. The conference model would provide a flexible alternative to district-based representation that requires no revision of the existing representation structure. It would be an easily implemented supplement to the current governance system.

A conference model would also allow for greater representation of viewpoints that are subordinated within the current governance structure. In the present model, debate programs consistently holding a minority position regarding values, needs, or polices are unlikely to have a committed spokesperson representing their views to the NDT Committee. We cast no aspersions on the work of district chairs to communicate with and represent all members of their districts. However, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that a person committed to a position would be a better, or at least more motivated, advocate than a person merely representing the view of others. A conference model would allow debate programs sharing concerns to group together as a conference and secure representation on the NDT Committee.

An institution or group deciding to participate in academic debate must conclude that the benefits received from sponsoring a program justify the necessary expenditure of resources. We take it as axiomatic that one important benefit is achieving meaningful competitive success. It is difficult for a new CEDA/NDT debate program to achieve a reasonable level of competitive success, at least in the short term, because it is very hard to maintain participant interest and institutional support without a reasonable hope of competitive success. A conference model can create a meaningful competitive reward for new programs without major reworking of the current NDT model. The functioning of athletic conferences is instructive. It is easy to find examples of athletic programs that have no realistic hope of competitive success in a particular activity's national tournament (e.g., the NCAA national basketball tournament). However, winning a conference title and qualifying for the national tournament is a very meaningful competitive accomplishment for those athletic programs. Conference success provides an easily understood and reasonably attainable competitive goal for new programs. A conference model also allows for the use of existing regional and athletic conference rivalries to be important for conference-level success.

A conference model could be designed to provide competitive incentives for existing programs to support new programs. For example, a newly formed conference could include both new programs and teams from existing programs. The new conference could be allocated two qualifying bids to the National Debate Tournament. One bid would be reserved for teams representing new programs. This guarantees that a new program would receive the competitive reward of qualifying for the national tournament. The second bid could be available to teams representing established programs if the conference met established threshold criteria for viability. This arrangement would create a clear and concrete competitive incentive for established programs to support both the creation and the viability of a new conference.

Conclusion

Both the decline of participation in CEDA/NDT debate and the governance challenges in fixing it are complex and multidimensional problems. We know participation is declining, as measured by both the number of active programs and the depth of participation by those programs. We lack detailed metrics on the depth of participation and organizational service required to reverse the trend. The AFA has been reenergized in recent years and could play a leadership role to help reverse course, focusing on professional development, alumni advocacy, format certification, and organizational interaction. One approach to reenergize regional debate is the conferences proposal, which might also improve representative governance with the NDT Committee in particular.

Despite participation and governance challenges, the CEDA/NDT community is not without governance strengths. These assets include the depth of service commitment from a short list of individuals. The AFA may be able to supplement and expand those efforts if some or all the governance proposals from this document develop support from evidence-based debate stakeholders. We recently celebrated the 75th NDT, but reaching the 100th NDT with a tournament worthy of its tradition will require recommitment to helping intercollegiate debate emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic stronger.

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8

Supporting and Developing New Programs

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Introduction

The National Debate Development Conference (NDDC) held in 2021 identified important themes for the development of policy debate, not the least of which was program development in the sense of supporting the growth of new programs as well as furthering the development of existing programs. Both, however, can present vexing challenges for collegiate debate, particularly considering declining program participation in recent years. While this problem has been noted across disparate debate formats and debate organizations, it speaks to the need for greater institutional support from national organizations created to foster and provide competitive venues for forensic speaking competition, including, but not limited to, the American Forensics Association.

This chapter outlines important areas of emphasis for debate program development and growth efforts identified during the NDDC conference and the challenges faced by new and developing programs (AFA, 2021). Much of this chapter advocates for the creation of a comprehensive set of materials produced to help universities start debate programs. However, these materials alone are probably insufficient to produce the sort of broad new program development that most existing program directors desire. Our primary argument, therefore, is that greater efforts by national debate organizations to help students, faculty, or administrators seeking to develop new programs is necessary, and we sketch some suggestions for what this support might look like. Although the insights gathered here are partial to the demands and needs expressed in relationship to the AFA and debate as a particular speaking platform, these issues speak also to the challenges facing many formats of forensics competition and related organizations.

A Comprehensive Look at Factors Constraining New Program Development

Developing a new program is often difficult due to three barriers: resource demands, lack of familiarity with debate practices, and institutional rules. The most significant factor constraining the development of new debate programs is securing the resources and materials necessary to start a program. This can be a daunting task, as it involves setting priorities for student participation, competitive success, and educational outcomes, all of which can be difficult for students, faculty, and administrators to assess in the abstract. Beyond setting priorities, it also requires predicting what resources will be required to meet those priorities and identifying where they can be acquired (Jarman, 2013/2014). Given the financial hardships facing many universities and colleges, it is unsurprising that securing financial resources is widely viewed as the biggest constraining factor for many new programs.

Beyond the resource factor, there is a lack of familiarity with debate that is a constraining factor for institutions looking to develop a debate program. There is a dramatic knowledge gap between new and existing programs about norms and expectations for intercollegiate debate, especially those involving more sophisticated or stylized formats. Beyond format-specific concerns, there also is frequently a knowledge gap related to argument theory and practice, especially if a prospective program is not tied to a department that emphasizes argumentation as part of its pedagogical focus. This familiarity factor cannot necessarily be resolved by relying on the ability of students or faculty to educate themselves about argumentation. Although there exists a voluminous amount of scholarship about argumentation and debate, the direct application of this scholarship to competitive debate is sometimes difficult to comprehend and often challenging for students who are already faced with limited institutional support. All of this is amplified by a lack of familiarity with how debate competition functions and its benefits on the part of administrators, which creates difficulties in making a case for starting a debate program.

Finally, institutional rules at colleges and universities are a substantial factor in limiting debate participation, especially for student-run organizations. Often, university policies and practices do not account for the unique demands of forensic competition. For example, many universities have rules that constrain the authority to spend funds for travel in a manner that limits the ability of students to organize travel. This problem is exacerbated in the debate context because many programs are perceived as existing in a gray area between athletic programs, because both are competitive in nature and travel, and student organizations, which typically have limited travel expectation. Altogether, this makes it difficult to articulate the needs of a debate program to administrators and faculty, particularly in comparison to those of athletic programs and student organizations.

The Economic Costs of Starting a New Program

Another barrier to starting new teams is the total cost to compete and the lack of clarity about the true costs of competition. For those who are contemplating creating a debate program, it is unclear what resources are necessary to start a program and then travel to compete. This uncertainty makes creating the infrastructure for forensics competition appear to be a high-risk proposition. To date, there has been limited effort among organizations overseeing forensic competition to provide guidelines or standards for what is required to support a program.

One reason why debate organizations have difficulty in providing this kind of information is that there are vast disparities in what is required to support different programmatic goals. For instance, for a team seeking to provide entry-level competition that has limited goals for competitive success but is in a geographic area with a healthy number of existing debate programs, it is possible to support a program with relatively limited resources. By contrast, a program seeking to compete at a high level in a region with relatively few debate programs might have dramatically higher resource demands. These considerations are difficult for university administrators to identify, thus making it challenging for them to accurately ascertain the institutional value of having a team compared to its financial costs.

Universities have different priorities, and debate team models reflect those aims. This ranges from clubs operated as small student organizations with some administrative support and local competition schedule, at the smaller end, to medium-sized programs with some faculty support and a regional travel profile, in the middle, to large-scale programs supported by tenure-track faculty with multiple assistant coaches and a national travel profile, on the larger end. Administrators, faculty, and students seeking to initiate a program should begin by analyzing the goals of their target institution and developing a model that fits those goals to make their program sustainable.

One cost associated with beginning a program is hiring or compensating a faculty director or coach. Some programs begin with a faculty member who works on a volunteer basis with no compensation, while others hire a new or compensate an existing faculty member to assume debate responsibilities as a part of their appointment. While the volunteer option might appear desirable, the substantial time and effort involved makes that option nearly impossible to sustain. In comparison, hiring a faculty member is a large expenditure, which some institutions may view as undesirable or infeasible. National debate organizations can assist people seeking information about starting a new program by providing guidelines for what is generally expected of a faculty member at various levels of involvement and what a reasonable financial investment in debate staffing on the part of the university might look like.

Beyond faculty and staff compensation costs, there are also travel and tournament-registration expenses. Many of those costs are associated with travel, such as hotels, transportation, and meals. Other costs include national organization memberships, tournament entry fees, and costs to hire tournament judging (both entry and hired judging fees increase proportionately to the number of students taken to a competition). Sample budgets discussed at NDDC ranged from $20,000 for small teams with limited and geographically constrained travel opportunities to $80,000 and more for large teams with an extensive, nationally oriented travel focus. According to Jarman's (2013/2014) survey of the top 100 CEDA programs, almost a quarter of respondents had an operating budget of less than $30,000. The most common budget range (28.4%) was between $40,000 and $59,999, and more than 25% of respondents indicated having a budget over $60,000 (six respondents had budgets over $100,000).

There are equipment, supplies, and technology costs. For example, students will need materials to use in debates. Pens, paper, and the ability to print debate materials might be relatively inexpensive. However, debate competitions heavily depend on each student having a laptop computer in competition. While some students might already have access to a laptop that they can use for competition, economically disadvantaged student will need the team to purchase or loan them a laptop computer, which can increase operating expenses very quickly. Other equipment costs might include purchase of video cameras and monitors so students can review their speech performances and debates.

To fund intercollegiate competition, three different sources that can be utilized. The first, and often the most common, option is direct funding from a department or office within one's college or university. Historically, communication studies departments funded debate programs, given the disciplinary attachment to the study of debate. That remained the case as of 2013, with 51 of the top 100 CEDA programs housed in communication departments (Jarman, 2013/2014). Yet, in recent years, there have arisen other sources of funding for debate programs, including other academic departments such as political science and honors colleges and administrative offices like an institution's provost office (Jarman, 2013/2014). Having a program attached to an administrative office or honors college is advantageous because funding is typically more reliable. The second source of funding can be student activity or organization funds. These funds can and have been used to support debate teams, but they present their own challenges. This option is typically limited in amount, with several restrictions on how funds are used, and it tends to be more capricious, as the debate program must request funds annually in competition with other student organizations for already-limited funds. The third source of funding is from external gifts, usually from a single wealthy donor or group of donors. Benefactors may provide adequate seed money to start a program, with a goal that the university take over responsibility for funding the team at a set point in the future, or funds are used to create a foundation or endowment to support the team independent of the university. However, this type of funding is the most difficult to secure. It is rare to find donors with both sufficient wealth and also interest in developing and supporting a team. Additionally, this type of funding is also unreliable, as the team's survival is tied to the personal finances and funding priorities of donors (e.g., see Willis, 2020). Nonetheless, some programs have successfully combined donor funding with university funds to expand their programs and enjoy longevity despite financial hardships facing their home institutions. Although other potential funding sources do exist, such as grants, they typically are constrained in such a way that they cannot be used to fund competitive debate travel. Instead, they serve as a helpful supplement to fund campus debate programming and outreach efforts.

In advancing a case to create a debate program, it is important to emphasize the number of students served by the proposed program. In conversations with administrators about the idea to start a program, it is important to gauge what is most important to the administrator: to provide several students a limited experience with debate activities or a small number of students with thorough experience with competition. Depending on the administrator's priority, your proposed budget, standards for measuring success of the program, and the program's needs will be affected. Tailoring your program pitch to match the administrator's stated interest, the university's, college's, and department's mission statements, and capabilities of the coach and students is important in making a persuasive case.

A few, but not all, national debate organizations have taken steps to ameliorate some of the costs associated with competition. These include waiving membership fees for new debate programs as well as allowing hybrid partnerships with existing programs, to help interested students from schools without programs to provide a proof of concept for administrators. There are some additional steps that national debate organizations could take that would also be helpful, such as instructing tournament directors to waive or reduce entry fees for new programs. Another approach is to create a set of materials that can be used to help generate proposals for new debate programs as well as to provide a guide for operating that program. National debate organizations could use a set of materials to help simplify and streamline the process of putting together proposals for new programs.

The bigger and more far-reaching task facing national debate organizations is providing institutional authority in support of program sales pitches. Creating standards for funding debate programs, and especially the faculty positions associated with them, would lend credibility and legitimacy to the requests presented in proposals for debate programs. Without agreement on national standards for what is necessary for a traveling debate program, it is difficult to advocate for the creation of new programs, as the substantial resources requested often strike administrators as excessive. A national "seal of approval" for new program requests would help add legitimacy to these efforts.

More research and assessment of the pedagogical, institutional, and community values of debate would lend credibility to the arguments that are made in favor of debate programs (for more about measuring and assessing the benefits of policy debate, see part 1 of this volume). Although piecemeal scholarship has been written on this topic, the extant research lives primarily in academic journals and lacks an institutional home outside of them. Publication of more comprehensive research, especially if collected under the auspices of competitive debate organizations, would help lend legitimacy to the requests made by people advocating for new debate programs. Additionally, tying assessment practices to specific debate organizations allows for more tailored arguments about how those organizations represent the pedagogical interests of the university and departments solicited to support debate programs.

Resource demand is the biggest factor that limits the ability of most programs to enter intercollegiate debate competition. Yet it is not an insurmountable obstacle, and some recent developments, such as the growth of online debate, offer promise for lowering the cost of competition. Other steps can and should be taken by the governing organizations in debate, not only to limit the entry costs of competition itself but also to assist the students, faculty, and administrators contemplating starting debate programs or making the case for debate at their institutions.

The Familiarity Factor

There exists a common and forgivable misperception that debate is familiar to humans, something that comes naturally and requires no expertise. Obviously, all people argue, but it does not mean that most people argue effectively. One of the original rationales for competitive programs was to serve as laboratories for argumentative and persuasion skills (McBath, 1975). However, operating within the laboratory requires a coach to guide students who are unfamiliar with advanced argumentation tactics and strategies. Without quality coaching and instruction, students struggle not just in terms of competitive success (Jarman, 2013/2014) but also in developing advanced argumentation skills. Students can compete without expert coaching, but it results in students who might have a negative competitive debate experience and one with limited, if any, pedagogical benefit.

This lack of familiarity spans the entirety of debate program development. Because competitive debate is an unfamiliar activity for many administrators, students too often find themselves lacking in the requisite support to have a positive experience. The familiarity factor should be understood, then, not as a barrier to participation per se but rather as a barrier to meaningful participation. This distinction is important, because it makes clear the disincentive for administrators to provide too little support for a debate program. For competitive debate to provide pedagogical benefits, it must be supported in a manner that allows students to have a pedagogically valuable experience, which entails the ability to practice and compete at a reasonable number of tournaments, with adequate instruction, in front of reasonably capable judges (for more on the pedagogical benefits of competition and how they can be best measured, see chapter 9).

There are two pertinent elements to the familiarity factor, related first to the practice of argumentation and second to administrative knowledge and competency. The first of these pertains to knowledge about argument practice and theory, research, and the norms associated with various debate formats and how they match the pedagogical interests of one's home institution. Although there are many students who pursue an undergraduate education with much of this knowledge from high school debate experience, the utility of their knowledge is limited. When those students graduate, that knowledge is largely lost, and the instruction and guidance that those students would use to transcend their high school experience remains absent.

The second aspect of the familiarity factor is related to team administration. For a debate team to travel and compete, there is a need for administrative competence in the areas of tournament travel and planning, budget management, and navigating university rules and regulations. This competence is scarcer than it might initially seem, as it requires the combined skills of a travel agent, bookkeeper, and university administrator in a single person. This is not necessarily information or knowledge that is widely shared or easily acquired. Nonetheless, debate coaches often develop these skills on the job and under stressful conditions, although for schools contemplating starting a debate team, such a competent administrator may not be readily available.

The simplest and ideal solution to the problem of familiarity is for academic institutions to recruit, hire, and retain full-time faculty with experience in competitive forensics. The problem for new programs is that even when they can identify the need for such faculty, they are not always readily available. A potential solution for this problem might be to recruit faculty members on campus to support the debate program, but there are very real problems with this approach. Learning the norms and practices of debate formats and accruing the training and knowledge necessary to administer a program is a time- and labor-intensive process. Most faculty are unwilling to take on such an endeavor without a substantial revision of their appointment or salary.

For existing faculty interested in starting a new program, there are resources available on campuses to help with the familiarity factor. For instance, many institutions have training materials and guidance available from a talent development center that might be housed under several different offices but is frequently housed within human resources or a center for faculty development. Classes from these offices are helpful for developing the skills necessary to deal with the conflicts that often arise between students and university policies. Other valuable information and courses for the financial management of a program are usually available from the financial offices of the college or university, which can help clarify the often arcane and seemingly impenetrable rules for spending. Although these are also time- and labor-intensive options, it is sometimes feasible for faculty to take advantage of these and other training resources available on campus to prepare themselves for the rigors of administering new or growing existing programs.

The debate expertise side of the familiarity problem requires understanding the difference between knowledge necessary to construct and organize effective argument and advanced competitive debate strategy and tactics. Most faculty teaching in a postsecondary setting have sufficient familiarity with good research practices, writing, and the principles of sound argument that they can help students craft basic debate arguments. What these faculty probably need assistance with is understanding how competitive debate requires specific refutation and oral delivery skills as well as the stylized practices associated with various debate formats.

To overcome the lack of knowledge about argument practices in debate formats, national debate organizations should work to provide a repository of institutional knowledge about competitive debate topics, files, and strategies. One notable example of what this might look like in the context of policy debate comes from the American Debate Association (ADA). The ADA has created what is called a "novice packet," which provides a starter set of research and arguments that is used throughout the fall semester for students who come to debate with no prior debate background. This packet helps new students and program directors by providing a model for collecting research and constructing arguments. In recent years, the ADA has also experimented with providing recordings of demonstration debates to show newcomers the oral delivery, refutation, and strategic aspects of competition.

While resources like the ADA packet and videos are helpful, they are limited in value. They are primarily examples, rather than guides, to help students and faculty think through how debate should be practiced. National debate organizations should provide more extensive instruction manuals for competition in each of their specific debate formats. This is not an entirely novel idea, as debate handbooks and textbook current exist. However, these materials can be expensive for individual students to purchase and tend not to be representative of specific debate formats. A better alternative would be for organizations to produce handbooks specific to their debate format at low or no cost, so that students and faculty starting or entering new programs would have more precise and helpful guides for participating in specific formats of debate.

There are other steps that could be taken to reduce the knowledge gap for new coaches or directors, such as training and mentorship programs. Online courses for debate coaches that explain the essentials of both preparing students for competition and overseeing the administrative needs of a program would go a long way toward bridging the knowledge gap for those who are leading, or seeking support for, new programs. Combining such courses with mentorship from existing programs' directors would help support coaches and faculty who are new to debate, by providing guidance on best practices and relieving anxiety about the daunting project of initiating and leading a debate program. This would allow faculty without backgrounds in competitive debate to develop the skills to provide instruction and guidance to students and administer team travel and budgeting. With such a system in place, a team could start without having a full-time faculty member as a bridge toward greater administrative support in the future.

The Institutional Rules Factor

Arguably, the place where national debate organizations can have the greatest impact in assisting in new program development or existing program enhancement is perhaps also the greatest challenge: helping programs find accurate analogies to explain the function and value of a debate program, an act of translation into the institutional rules of the university. Higher learning institutions have difficulty perceiving the way debate functions in comparison to other campus programs and activities. This is often the result of deploying imperfect analogies to understand debate, resulting in skewed perceptions that create institutional rules that significantly hinder participation in competitive debate.

While comparing debate to intercollegiate athletic competition sometimes can be a helpful analogy, as it represents the competitive ethos of debate and the team travel for competition, it is a problematic comparison in other ways. For example, when a program does not achieve competitive success, the athletics analogy might serve as an argument in favor of removing a faculty member from their coaching position or potentially eliminating a program altogether. This perspective ignores the educational benefit of debate for students, prioritizing victory and wins over all else. Students who do not win or do not win enough to satisfy the expectations of departments or donors are not perceived as having benefited from competition.

Another analogy used to justify a debate team is that it is like other student organizations on campus. This comparison is helpful in that it captures the democratic ethos of many debate programs and centers the pedagogical purpose of debate. The primary problem with the comparison, however, is that it fails to accurately capture the infrastructure necessary to support competitive debate. Most student organizations do not have faculty members who are compensated for developing them. They also tend to have much more limited travel opportunities and far fewer resources. To the extent that debate programs tend to work with and affiliate themselves with the university and the community, especially local high schools, they operate on a scale entirely unlike most student organizations. The result is that rules for spending, approvals for travel, and oversight of student activities can be excessively limiting and unreliable for debate programs. Student organizations are effective at supporting small-scale clubs and social organizations; they are a poor analogy for the complexity of a traveling competitive program.

For persons advocating on behalf of new debate programs, the temptation to adopt a sports or student organization analogy is understandably strong, because it provides a rhetorical bridge to assist in understanding the function and value of a debate program. Doing away with these analogies entirely may not be desirable, but advocates should be diligent in emphasizing the differences and distinctions between competitive debate and its analogues. Stressing the extent to which the pedagogical focus of debate balances the competitive elements of the activity and how the scale of a debate program differs from other student organizations is important to assure that those differences are accounted for in how universities conceptualize and support their debate programs.

National debate organizations can assist in these efforts. Organizations should collect, compile, and make accessible materials for persons proposing new debate programs, not only to create potentially lifelong relationships with new programs but also because access to those materials would ensure that programs' advocates make clear pitches and arguments about the benefits of debate to administrators. Including information on how to articulate the distinctions between debate programs and athletic teams and student organizations would be another way that national organizations could promote debate and foster greater understanding of its unique benefits.

Conclusion

Resource demand, familiarity, and institutional rules are challenges facing all new debate program. National organizations should help new programs address these problems with common approaches. For too long, advocates for a new program have had to face these challenges without adequate support or resources. Competing at the collegiate level is a valuable and challenging endeavor, but it requires substantial institutional support. National organizations could provide materials and resources to advocates of new programs to win institutional support from administrators. This support should come in the form of helping students, faculty, or administrators craft a successful pitch for a program, training and mentoring for coaches, and sharing debate resources between programs.

Pitching the need for a new program is no small task. Although administrators in the abstract often support the idea of deliberation and debate, the actual practices and competitive nature of intercollegiate debate often clash with administrators' expectations, which are framed by political debates or debate representations in popular culture. For example, administrators do not understand when students speak quickly or do not follow fundamental public-speaking norms. Worse, their knowledge of the activity might be shaped by a few viral videos that paint intercollegiate debate in a negative way. The task facing national debate organizations is to find ways to positively frame the function and value of intercollegiate debate in ways that correct or overcome any administrators' preconceived beliefs about debate. Taking advantage of their national profile and professional status, these organizations should put together materials like those suggested in this chapter that would both comprehensively and accurately provide administrators with a precise and positive understandings of debate and its value to their institutions.

We do not wish to give readers the wrong impression. Although starting a new program is a daunting challenge, it is possible and indeed happens every year. Our goal here has been to emphasize how we might mitigate the impact of the factors constraining new schools from starting collegiate debate programs by diminishing the sense of risk and increasing the understanding of the rewards of competitive debate. This, we argue, can be made achievable by more concerted and focused efforts from national debate organizations.

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Part III

Reaching Audiences

9

Building Student-Centered Learning Practices in Policy Debate

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Introduction

Crisis is a persistent theme in college policy debate. Fear of an activity under strain or threat of collapse is a frequent theme at annual academic conferences. Some people wryly observe that a crisis mentality is an endemic feature of policy debate itself and the activity's obsession with the worst-case scenario. However, at the risk of being dismissed as simply the latest iteration of this cycle, there is compelling evidence that college policy debate is not simply at risk; it is *already* experiencing an existential crisis. Although several groups at the 2021 Debate Develop Conference stressed different facets of this crisis, such as pressure from administrators or outside audiences, we explored the activity's relationship with its core constituency: the student participants. Research shows policy debate programs confronting two major student challenges over the next several years: a decline in policy debate's traditional high school recruiting pipeline and demographic shifts on college campuses. In this changing landscape, directors of policy debate programs must find ways to effectively engage students, meet the demands of administrators to justify program resources, and balance all of that with an already demanding workload.

In response, we recommend that program directors implement strategies to ensure that their programming, in all the ways it is taught and communicated to students, is intentional, transparent, and student-centered. These strategies are likely to vary and require critical scrutiny of both debate activities and the messaging used to justify them. Adjustments will require identifying gaps between dominant competitive practices and student needs and then adapting activities to align student perceptions with the demonstrable skills and experiences they desire. Successful messaging will require a tested and proven value proposition for the program that credibly resonates with multiple audiences. Some changes can be achieved by a program director, while others may require coordination with debate governance bodies and tournament hosts. These efforts should sync with program assessments geared toward administrative audiences, amplifying such work while avoiding overstretch. Indeed, such synergy between tasks is essential to protect the long-term well-being of the director (Cram, 2021). Regardless of what shape these efforts take, directors must start with mapping their program's activities to specific student learning outcomes (SLOs). This process requires three key ingredients: a set of specific SLOs that appropriately fit the program's institutional mandate, a mapping template, and the mapping process itself.

We make the case for student-centered teaching and assessment throughout the rest of this chapter. First, we outline the immediate participation exigence that college policy programs face and highlight initial implications from research concerning demographic shifts. Second, we introduce the concept and process of curriculum mapping aligned to specific SLOs. Third, we highlight two recommendations for the future related to generating more precise assessment concepts and building a culture of formative assessment in debate. Finally, we conclude by outlining a few implications that the college policy debate community must consider over the next several years.

Collapsing Participation and Generational Shifts

College policy debate participation numbers in most areas of the country have fallen consistently for decades. However, recent evidence suggests that the pace of decline is both accelerating and magnified by a decline in high school participation. A 2021 survey of college policy debate programs found that since 2016, the number of schools participating in college policy debate has declined by nearly one third (Frappier et al., 2021a). The same report found that the National Speech and Debate Association has seen participation in high school policy debate decline by one-third over the past ten years from close to 17,000 participants in the early 2010s to only 10,000 in the 2019–2020 season (Frappier et al., 2021a). College policy debate is likely to face further declines because of the COVID-19 pandemic and demographic pressures facing higher education. A survey of college policy debate programs found that half of those programs responding faced budget uncertainty or budget cuts because of the pandemic (Frappier et al., 2021b). Colleges and universities also are likely to see budgetary pressures increase as demographic trends in the United States reduce the number of traditional college-aged students in the coming years (Seltzer, 2020).

In addition to producing less revenue, shifting campus demographics threaten policy programs in other ways. US higher education is in the beginning stages of a profound demographic shift occurring on two fronts. First, nontraditional student populations are expected to grow. Nontraditional students, typically defined as students older than 25 years old, already make up 73% of the college student population in the United States (APPA, 2020). Although nontraditional students are most often associated with community colleges, their presence on four-year campuses will swell as institutions seek to increase enrollments to meet budget needs. Debate directors thus need to consider how to reach a population traditionally ignored entirely by college policy debate. Second, the traditional student population is undergoing a significant transition as students from Generation Z replace millennials as the dominant college demographic. Most often defined as people born between 1995 and 2012, Generation Z represents a significant and abrupt break from millennials' experiences, expectations, and desires in higher education (APPA, 2020; Selingo, 2018). Although a generational lens risks painting with too broad of a brush, programs must understand how student needs have evolved to ensure consistent demand and use of resources (Dungy & Peck, 2019). Generational data is a useful starting point for identifying common formative experiences in the student population, facilitating a close fit between what programming is offered and what students are seeking.

Two specific themes stand out from established research on Generation Z. First, its members prioritize economics over most other considerations. Many within this generation witnessed their parents and older millennial siblings struggle during the 2008 recession and its long-term effects, especially rising tuition costs and the difficulty of obtaining quality employment after graduating. As a result, members of Generation Z are incredibly cost conscious, career oriented, and wary of taking on coursework or activities they perceive as irrelevant to their economic goals (APPA, 2020; Mintz, 2019). Second, Generation Z students' K–12 experiences were defined by the era of high-stakes testing. They are thus performance oriented but not prepared for the college learning environment or well versed in critical thinking or creative learning processes (Northern Illinois University Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, 2020). They were also raised with much-higher levels of parental involvement, resulting in less self-sufficiency and very busy high school lives. Generation Z students thus show up on campuses already experiencing high levels of burnout and constant stress (APPA, 2020; Mintz, 2019). Comprehensive resources outline numerous other ways Generation Z students differ from previous cohorts, including their learning style, increased diversity and expectation that programs take diversity seriously, and values (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Selingo, 2018) We recommend that directors better acquaint themselves with research on this new generation beyond what is highlighted in this report, particularly because directors and coaches will almost always be from a different generational cohort.

We immediately identified several connections between the demographic data and declines in participation we have witnessed with our own programs. By far the most significant issue facing debate programs, and all campus programs built around student involvement in co- and extracurricular activities, is the shifting student cost equation. As tuition costs keep rising and students are less willing or able to pursue student loans, more students resort to balancing schoolwork with employment. As Dungy and Peck (2019) argue, "This fact alone dramatically changes the college experience for many. It deprives these individuals of time for study and likely inhibits their participation in co-curricular experiences. From a practical standpoint, the more hours a student works, the less time they have for involvement on campus" (p. 6). Economic cost is only one facet of the challenge, however. The evolving student population is increasingly conscious of debate participation's opportunity cost. Based on our experience, we noted that the time required for travel and missing school was a deal breaker for more and more students. Debate now competes with several other priorities, in addition to employment. Debate programming that is perceived by students as isolated from their college goals is likely to be deprioritized. Crucially, each of these factors is likely to intensify as colleges and universities compete for a smaller pool of students and as rates of high school debate participation decline. These dynamics also affect students who have competitive high school debate experience. No policy program or director, no matter how well resourced or competitive, can afford to ignore these trends. It is difficult to defend budgets, scholarships, or coaching job lines if there are not students using the resources, especially when institutions are placing everything under the fiscal microscope.

Despite the many challenges caused by these demographic changes, research into future student generations suggests that the picture is not entirely bleak. Intercollegiate policy debate can offer a great deal to Generation Z and nontraditional students and can be made to speak directly to their goals and ambitions. Generation Z students have an enormous craving for community, relationships, and face-to-face engagement. As we know from our own experience and those of our alumni, these are central features of participating in debate. Generation Z is also in dire need of training in critical thinking and information literacy (Northern Illinois University Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, 2020), two other hallmarks of intercollegiate policy debate. Additionally, the importance of economic success and return on investment for traditional and nontraditional student populations is an enormous opportunity for debate programs. The National Association of Colleges and Employers' most highly sought "soft skills" are recognizable to any policy debate director: "critical thinking/problem solving; oral and written communications; teamwork/collaboration; digital technology; leadership; professionalism/work ethic; career management; and global intercultural fluency" all top the list (Dungy & Peck, 2019, p. 11). If intercollegiate policy debate can offer so much to students on our campuses, why are fewer and fewer students opting to participate?

Answering that question definitively may prove impossible given the diversity of institutions, programmatic structures, and students served by debate. However, a few implications stand out. First, there is a growing gap between the dominant model of competitive debate participation (e.g., extensive summer preparation, long and frequent travel days, and significant time commitment during the school year) and the students who are most frequently found on campus. Second, student perceptions are reality in a voluntary cocurricular activity. If students believe that they cannot participate, they will not. If students believe debating is not relevant to their goals, they are unlikely to give the activity as much effort or time, even if they have significant high school experience. If students do not see evidence that their participation is providing them what they sought, they are unlikely to continue after having started. Ultimately, directors must appreciate that students themselves are as vital of an audience to persuade as are the administrators or alumni who provide program resources. Intercollegiate policy debate has a great deal to offer this core stakeholder, but it is a mistake to presume that such a perception is automatic or even easy.

SLOs, Mapping, and Policy Debate

In response to policy debate's participation decline, we turn to discussions of assessment. Such a move may be initially confusing. After all, why resort to tools that are more commonly associated with administrators and department planners? Most undergraduates have not heard of assessment outside the context of grading, and few of them probably care to learn more. Yet, program assessment can be of vital important to a college debate program. As the recruiting pool from high school policy debate continues to decline, programs must inevitably serve students outside that pipeline. Additionally, colleges and universities are scrutinizing all programming more closely as budgets are squeezed, creating a need for programs to prove they are serving a significant number of students. Finally, because institutions are competing for precious tuition dollars, the ability for debate programs to offer competitive scholarships is likely to diminish, especially as overall tuition rates increase (Whitford, 2021). These elements add up to one undeniable truth: policy debate programs must be able to attract and retain students who are already on their campus. That means trying to serve students who are not already "dyed-in-the-wool" policy debate adherents, as well as students who lack previous debate experience. Such drastic changes in the participant pool mean that policy programs must be thinking about how to attract and retain such students, something that college policy debate is notoriously bad at doing. That in turn will require serious consideration of student engagement strategies through transparent, student-centered debate teaching. Before unpacking these specific elements, it is important to clarify the relationship between mapping and the broader assessment process.

Debate programs need to produce measurable program assessment data. Doing so is crucial to demonstrate relevance and justify resources from administrators and unit heads (Lain & Anderson-Lain, 2021). Program assessments are often built with summative data and designed for administrative audiences, making it easy to overlook the student experience. Indeed, most students will never see such data. Assessment should not be only retrospective, however. If done well, it provides insight into teaching effectiveness and drives curricular changes to improve student engagement and success. A critical element of this process is transparency for students. Greater transparency of instructional design and assessment, both formative and summative, has proven to substantially promote learning and success, especially for underserved demographics (Brown McNair, 2016). Unfortunately, there is a considerable gap between the formative assessments students receive about their learning throughout their time in debate (e.g., wins/losses and speaker points) and the program-level learning outcomes most administrators seek. Moreover, coach and judge feedback are often couched only in terms of competitive performance. As a result, students might learn a great deal about how to win their next debate and still not perceive the progress they are making toward their own learning goals.

This gap is unproductive, if not dangerous for the sustainability of the program. Program directors need to do more to "translate" the learning value of competition. Failure to connect competition to overall student learning perpetuates declines in student participation. If students cannot grasp debate's relevance now and stop participating, there simply will not be program alumni to look back fondly on their transformative experience of debate. Mapping and subsequently teaching to specific SLOs cannot resolve the entirety of the crisis that college policy debate faces, but it can begin to address the problem by harmonizing the work that directors must inevitably do to engage students and satisfy administrators. Moreover, advances in formative student assessment and student-centered debate teaching are desirable in their own right, especially if they can improve student learning and expose more people to the benefits of debate.

We mapped five specific SLOs to competitive policy debate practices. We selected these SLOs in coordination with the 2021 National Debate Development Conference Debate Research, Scholarship, and Assessment working group to ensure a close fit between our efforts. The SLOs chosen were civic engagement, oral communication, critical thinking, information literacy, and intercultural knowledge and competence. The specific wordings and skills associated with these outcomes are outlined in greater detail in chapter 3. It is important to use common and consistent SLOs across debate programs, even if not all programs participate in the same formats of debate. As Lain and Anderson-Lain (2021) argue, consistent SLOs attached to institutionally validated concepts and rubrics are necessary to ensure that assessments are produced in a currency valued by university administrators. A common set of SLOs and assessments also aids in recognizing debate's potential as a high-impact practice.

The SLOs we used are derived from the National Communication Association's Learning Outcomes in Communication project (n.d.), which is well suited for programs that are traditionally tied to communication studies departments. However, almost all these outcomes also are closely associated with the American Forensic Association's (2018) values and mission. We encourage directors to use these five SLOs as a starting point. In many instances, these SLOs will need to be adapted to the demands of directors' home institution and location on campus. It is likely that the program's host unit already uses similar outcomes. With specific SLOs generated, the next step is mapping the curriculum to those outcomes.

Curriculum mapping is an important tool that debate coaches can use to connect the different aspects of debate pedagogy with learning outcomes

(Lam & Tsui, 2013; Morehead & LaBeau, 2004). Debate educators can use curriculum mapping to demonstrate student improvement in targeted areas ranging from academic skills to developing character traits (Jacobs, 2004). For debate educators, mapping is an important tool needed to link the many different aspects of debate pedagogy to institutional student learning outcomes and demonstrate the value of debate to administrators. Mapping is also one of the first steps in designing transparent, student-centered learning environments. As the National Communication Association (2015) explains, "co-curricular mapping highlights the ways in which such activities enhance programs and can result in more intentional strategies to utilize program-related clubs toward student learning" (p. 5). It can ensure that students are aware of the value of debate activities and can track their own learning and success beyond recorded wins and losses.

To map a dynamic activity, a director must first generate a template that roughly captures the entire terrain a student will cover by participating. We developed a debate life-cycle map that identifies significant sites of student learning associated with discrete activities and tasks. The template identifies five major sites where students are engaged in debate effort, whether working alone or alongside peers, coaches, or judges. First, there is pretournament activities, which includes things such as writing topic papers, doing preliminary argument research and construction, and working with coaches and teammates through practice rounds and skill building. Second, there are competition rounds themselves, including preround preparation. The map reveals that each round is a complex mixture of distinct communication skills that makes use of both advance preparation and extemporaneous or impromptu performance. The third area focuses solely on the decision and commentary period. Between oral and written comments, question-and-answer sessions, and post-round debriefings, mapping suggests that this is a rich area for both passive and active student learning. Fourth, there is the transition between one tournament to the next, with unique moments for both iterative and creative learning as students revise arguments, develop new strategies, and work with coaches and peers to develop skills through practice. Finally, participation in debate is rich with learning moments linked to the travel, social engagement, and community interaction outside the confines of competition. We have shared the template generated by the group in table 9.1,

Table 9.1. Curriculum Mapping Template

	Civic engagement	Critical thinking	Communication (oral, written, digital)	Information literacy	Intercultural knowledge and competence	Scale: 1 = possible, 2 = likely, 3 = strong (contribution to the SLO)
Pretournament						
Writing topic papers						
Argument research						
Argument construction						
Team retreats/ work sessions						
Team-building exercises						
Skill-building exercises						
Coaching/ feedback						
Practice rounds						
Debate rounds						
Pre-round preparation/ strategy						
Constructive speeches						
Rebuttal speeches						
Cross-examination						
Flowing						
In-round strategy						
Audience adaptation						
Extemporaneous responses						
Postround/ decision-RFD						
Oral comments						
Written comments						

	Civic engagement	Critical thinking	Communication (oral, written, digital)	Information literacy	Intercultural knowledge and competence	Scale: 1 = possible, 2 = likely, 3 = strong (contribution to the SLO)
Discussion/Q&A						
Postround coach-student						
End of tournament, transition to next						
Patchwork/iteration of existing arguments.						
Innovation/invention of topic						
Targeted refutation/research						
Coaching/feedback						
Practice debates						
Redo speeches						
Social elements and noncompetitive elements						
Tournament location/travel exposure						
Cultural context of programming						
Peer-to-peer interactions						
Experiencing/building community						
Weekly meetings						
Event planning						
Public debate events						
Alum interaction						

and a fillable spreadsheet version of it can be located on the American Forensic Association's website (https://www.americanforensicsassoc.org/debate-development-conference/). The template can also be easily adapted by directors to fit their unique programming.

With specific SLOs and a template in hand, the next step for a director is the actual mapping process. It is important to remember that not every SLO will be relevant to each part of the debate cycle and that some elements may relate to multiple SLOs. Some life-cycle elements will teach different facets of an SLO with varying levels of intensity. For example, "critical thinking" may be occurring at every moment in debate but more intensely during time-pressured analytic moments such as cross-examination. To aid in mapping, we developed a three-point scale to record the likely intensity. Specific activities can then be ranked according to whether their contribution to the SLO is possible (1), likely (2), or strong (3). To be clear, this scale does not measure the extent of student learning occurring at any moment in debate. It is a heuristic that directors and coaches can use to identify sites where they should be assessing student performance and designing intentional and transparent formative assessments that students can use to track their learning.

We recommend that this process be conducted by all program directors regardless of program size, relationship with home institution, or format of debate programming offered. The process would require adapting the life-cycle template to the specific activities and SLOs that are relevant to that program. Mapping is best done collaboratively to promote articulation of teaching goals and strategies, whether in concert with fellow directors, a coaching staff, or the program's unit authority. We engaged in our own mapping exercise for college policy debate, which is also shared on the AFA's website (https://www.americanforensicsassoc.org/debate-development-conference/). Our work revealed that college policy debate is a high-impact activity that engages students in learning in an astonishing number of ways. Several of us suggested that the mapping exercise had tremendous value for revealing sites and contexts of learning that we had never consciously considered. The more directors can do to be conscious and intentional about debate learning, the more likely they are to succeed in engaging students and persuading administrators about the value of the activity.

Mapping also plays an important role in defending programs that are under scrutiny or pressured to demonstrate how they serve the broader campus. It is also feasible to map noncompetitive or social activities such as public debates. Mapping is also relevant to any form of debate and to programs that are diverse in their offerings beyond policy debate. In the latter case, mapping helps identify the unique benefits that college policy debate brings to the entire program, even if most students do not participate directly in the policy format. Experienced students bring research expertise, leadership skills, and peer-teaching resources, and the mapping process can illuminate those dynamics more clearly.

Recommendations for Assessment Development

The mapping process and our deliberations about the results highlighted two elements related to the challenges that policy debate faces over the next several years. On the one hand, college policy debate's signature processes (e.g., deep and targeted research, technical presentation and evaluation of arguments, debates about evidence source and quality, and oral advocacy) are powerful engines for student learning, engagement, and enrichment. On the other hand, several adaptations are necessary to bridge the gap between dominant modes of competitive practice and students on our campuses. In the language of student-centered learning, college policy debate could do a lot more to help "meet students where they are at." We thus advance two sets of recommendations related to assessing student learning in the activity.

One of our recommendations is to refine our student learning assessment categories. Too often, we claim that intercollegiate policy debate provides broad gains in communication, critical thinking, information literacy, and social and emotional learning without any indication of the intensity or specific nature of that learning. So long as these claims remain relatively generalized, the unique benefits of college policy debate ultimately become meaningless in the eyes of administrators and students. After all, why participate in or fund an activity if it appears as if equivalent benefits can be more easily obtained through classroom and other co- and extracurricular learning? This need is particularly salient as administrators seek less resource-intensive debate formats and students wonder what debate in college offers that they do not already possess. Instead, we suggest more sophisticated theoretical models to create assessment tools, especially in the areas of communication, critical thinking, information literacy, and social and emotional learning (SEL).

Communication assessment can be enriched in two dimensions. First, assessment and teaching should disambiguate the mode of communication across oral, written, and digital channels. Participating in policy debate develops student skills in each mode as well as the ability to synthesize and move between oral presentation, digital formatting of content, and written material. Developing a specific assessment sequence for oral, written, and digital communication such as the University of Wyoming's (n.d.) could benefit many policy debate programs. Second, policy debate holds a distinct advantage over other formats in that it provides specific learning opportunities for several discrete oral argumentation skills. While all debate formats involve argument construction, elaboration, refutation, evaluation, and analysis, policy debate is the only established format that locates each skill within a specific speech slot and provides significant amounts of repetition and iterative development of those skills. Moreover, students gain equal exposure to these skills during a debate tournament and through working in a partnership; each is guaranteed a constructive, a rebuttal, and both asking and answering cross-examination questions. That is not true of formats where students speak only once in a debate or where the format is unbalanced, with some students speaking more often than others.

In the area of critical thinking, the Paul-Elder Critical Thinking Model breaks down critical thinking instruction into three distinct phases: teaching of standards, application of reasoning, and production of intellectual traits (Paul & Elder, 2019). This model maps well onto how coaching and pre-round preparation, in-round debating and refutation, and student learning operate in policy debates. This is a much more structured understanding of critical thinking that distinguishes the benefits of policy debate from other activities that involve critical thinking.

Regarding information literacy, the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (n.d.) Information Literacy VALUE Rubric includes categories that reflect many of the lessons taught in coaches' research lectures and students' application of that instruction. For instance, the rubric easily maps onto how students "determine the extent of information needed," "access the needed information," and "evaluate information and its sources critically." The important adaptation, however, is to note the rapid and extemporaneous way students do this work to prepare speeches while listening to their opponents. It is the speed and time constraints that make this a high-impact educational practice in information literacy, and this needs to be emphasized in assessment material.

Social and emotional learning is an underappreciated element of competitive policy debate. Intercollegiate debate requires students to engage in switch-side debate and perspective taking, focus on task performance, regulate stress, collaborate, and maintain an open mind to new information and arguments. These actions mirror the Big Five Model of SEL, as defined by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in its widely recognized 2018 study on SEL outcomes. Longitudinal research by Rogers, Freeman, and Rennels (2017) demonstrates a relationship between policy debate and these SEL outcomes, as self-reported by debate alumni. More work should be done to rigorously assess this as a high-impact educational outcome of our activity. We have posted material to the AFA website (https://www.americanforensicsassoc.org/debate-development-conference/) that further illustrates how communication, critical thinking, information literacy, and SEL can be described with better categories and mapped to policy debate practices.

Our second series of recommendations concerns the need to develop concrete formative assessment data throughout the debate life cycle. There is a significant discrepancy between the goals and expectations a student brings to a debate program and the feedback they routinely receive through participation. Contemporary policy debate provides students with only two forms of trackable data after every round: win/loss and a speaker point score, neither of which clearly speaks to the most common reasons students cite for joining debate. The current 30-point speaker scale, with no means to differentiate between elements of "speaking," verges on being useless for anything other than determining elimination-round seeding. College policy debate's competitive tradition has honed these data points into precise metrics for determining brackets and seeding, but they provide little meaningful data about student learning over time. Moreover, most qualitative feedback that students receive is seldom recorded in trackable form. Policy debate is unique in that it involves significant levels of student-instructor contact through coaching, file and research feedback, and oral decisions. While directors and alumni understand how transformative those moments of teaching are, they produce no concrete record that can be easily handed over to students or administrators. There is thus an overwhelming need for clearer, trackable formative and cumulative assessment feedback designed *for* student learners. Such tools would also greatly aid directors in their program assessment efforts.

We recommend several strategies for developing these tools. First, specific performance measurements should be incorporated into the standard policy debate ballot on use in tournament hosting sites like Tabroom. These metrics could be adapted from those used in Pacific Northwest Debate, a regional evidence-based debate format that strives to be student centered and public oriented. As outlined on its website (https://www.westerndebateunion.org/student-success), a judge in each round of competition rates students on their performance in use of evidence, analysis, communication, and community. Ratings are based on a ten-point scale. They are not currently incorporated into the tournament's seeding procedures, but students are recognized for achievement in these categories at the end of a tournament, just as policy debate does with speaker awards. A full description of each rating area is also located on the PNW Debate website (https://www.westerndebateunion.org/pnwdebate). The specific rating areas used for college policy debate might vary, but they should be closely associated with the specific SLOs we outline above. There is also ample room to experiment with the specific scale, including mirroring the AAC&U VALUE rubrics (https://www.aacu.org/initiatives/value-initiative/value-rubrics). Doing so would serve many of the goals outlined by this conference's Research, Scholarship, and Assessment Working Group (see part 1 of this volume). We leave it as an open question whether such ratings should be used for pairing and bracket procedures during a tournament. Such a determination is not needed; data can be collected for students and coaches even if it never interacts with the tabulation side of the tournament.

Second, the activity needs to build a culture of assessment among coaches, judges, and participants. It is easy to imagine our recommendation for specific ballot measures above being met with derision or hostility by debate coaches and students, especially if they were used to affect competitive outcomes. Sufficient buy-in will be necessary for the activity to successfully navigate the challenges it faces. That in turn will require that directors successfully communicate the importance for assessment and build it in as a regular feature of the competitive landscape at tournaments and their home campus. One of the biggest challenges with assessment is the time and effort required to generate data, especially written feedback. The ballot measures recommended above can be easily aggregated and tracked, but they may not capture enough detail for some SLOs. We recommend that the college policy community establish "assessment track" tournaments near the end of the fall and spring semesters. Assessment tournaments could function as a site for collecting feedback on student performance across the SLOs and recording self-assessments through survey instruments. If measurements were published well in advance, directors could administer assessments at the start of the term or season and track their students' performance over the course of the year.

A limited number of assessment tournaments has several advantages. They could be an important step in building assessment norms without suddenly turning on the floodgates before the community appreciates the need for assessment or guidance on how to conduct it. Such tournaments could also tap into some of the ethos of experimentation that the community has traditionally favored, especially at the midpoint of the season. Two tournaments over the course of a year would yield enough data to be useful to directors, coaches, and students without becoming unwieldy or onerous to process. Timing these assessments for the end of fall and the end of the spring semesters would also benefit programs that serve novices or students who only plan to debate a single term. Novice retention is even more challenging for students who join the season at the midway point. A spring assessment tournament would provide students data to make sense of their growth or performance rather than comparing it to novices who debated throughout the fall and spring terms.

Our final recommendation is an area for future exploration. As highlighted earlier, a great deal of student-teacher contact in the debate life cycle occurs during coaching sessions. Coaching is indeed one of policy debate's signature strengths, especially at the college level. In few other activities or classroom environments do students receive as much access or exposure to teaching expertise. Whether through file commentary, practice rounds, redo speeches, or targeted drill work, policy debate students receive immense levels of instruction, feedback, criticism, and encouragement. Presently, none of this effort is recorded or tracked despite being an integral part of the experience. Future development work by governance organizations or directors should target the development of assessment options during these moments. Ideally, such options should serve the dual function of providing usable data for program assessment and formative data for students to track their learning. It is likely some of this work has been pioneered, especially in the online era of debate camps. Members of our work group noted that they used learning management system (LMS) platforms like Canvas to organize and track student work throughout summer camps and deliver feedback. Given the rich suite of assessment tools built into most LMS systems, this is likely to prove a fruitful venue for exploration.

Conclusion

The success of any of these recommendation hinges on community buy-in. "Assessment" cannot simply be a language in which only directors are fluent or reserved for academic conferences or publications. College policy debate has long prided itself on its independence, eccentric modes of communication, and idiosyncratic procedures for recognizing student achievement. Holding fast to that tradition of isolation in the face of the current exigence threatens the activity. If policy debate programs cannot achieve alignment between administrator demands, student expectations and needs, and the actual on-the-ground reality of debate tournaments, the current rate of decline will soon exceed the critical mass needed to sustain national intercollegiate policy debate. Even if a small core of well-resourced programs remains to annually crown a champion, fewer and fewer students will experience the transformative impact of the activity. That, ultimately, is the real tragedy. We conclude by reflecting on a few implications of this work.

First, refining assessment tools and promoting student-centered learning are essential steps for all policy programs, and collective action is necessary. The significant resource disparities among policy debate programs often exacerbate the crises we confront. Those with the most influence over the activity often are the least pressured to demonstrate the power of their work. Such programs also often have a recruiting and retention advantage and may not yet feel the declining rates of high school participation because they recruit from a national pool of debate students. On the flip side, many other programs with esteemed traditions of excellence are struggling as the winds of administrative and student desires shift around them. Coordinated effort can harness efficiencies of scale and reduce the strain on these at-risk programs.

Collective action also produces credibility and rigor in assessment procedures. The more policy debate and debate and forensics organizations can do to clearly demonstrate the relevance and rigor of their activity, the stronger all programs will be. Colleges and universities are looking for ways to capture students' interest and offer them exhilarating, enriching, and challenging experiences that will also provide them marketable skills for the future. Policy debate programs should position themselves as an integral part of the solution. As Dungy and Peck (2019) explain, "Skills desired by employers such as teamwork, critical thinking or leadership cannot be learned without a context in which to apply them. Campus activities provide that context, serving as yet another way that this profession can provide leadership within the modern university" (p. 11). Success in this regard can help debate programs establish themselves as cornerstones of their institution, rather than a mysterious group of eccentrics who speak rapidly.

Second, college policy debate organizations need to have serious conversations about how to align tournament schedules with the demands facing college students. One drawback of the activity's intensity is the message sent to students that college policy debate is an all-or-nothing time commitment. Progress in developing better messaging and student-centered feedback can ameliorate some of this concern, or at least convince more students that the "all" is preferable to the "nothing." However, participation levels are likely to continue shrinking as long as the price of admission demands missed class, lengthy tournaments, and extensive travel. Given the National Debate Development Conference's focus on professional development, we chose to focus our efforts on steps that program directors could take immediately, as well as strategies that newer directors may be unfamiliar with. As a result, difficult conversations about how to adapt competitions must occur, and it must be a community-wide discussion. We should endeavor to make sure that those who have a long-term stake in the success of college policy debate, notably professional directors and teachers, are vocal participants.

Ultimately, debate programs need to reconsider the relationship between access and rigor in intercollegiate debate. The two variables are presently treated as if they trade off. For example, Eckstein and Bartanen (2015) tout British Parliamentary (BP) debate as an excellent format for 21st-century college students primarily because it is accessible. As BP debate includes total preparation time limited to 15 minutes, a prohibition on research, evidence, and coaching, and a per-student speaking time of only seven minutes each debate, such an argument should concern those who cherish the value of policy debate. Those same policy debate adherents also mistakenly advance the view that policy debate is not accessible *because* it is rigorous. Indeed, this is held up as a point of pride by many policy debate advocates. We recommend recasting the equation: What can policy debate programs do to *provide access to* rigorous debate learning? Such framing is the best way to remain true to the imperative to provide student-centered education. Bear in mind that "meeting students where they are at" does not mean subsequently leaving them there. College policy debate's tradition of providing intensive levels of support, feedback, and teaching is one of the best tools for equipping students with the skills they need to succeed and transform themselves for the better. In some cases, this will require changing but not abandoning dominant modes of competition. In other instances, it will require directors to embed their policy debate team within a broader ecology of debate and civic engagement. In either case, a commitment to *accessible rigor* is the best bet for college policy debate not only to survive immediate challenges but to play a decisive role in shaping the lives of 21st-century college students.

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10

Communicating to Institutional Audiences

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Introduction

Trees that fall in the forest make no noise. Likewise, forensics programs that lie below the radar typically do not last long when it comes to priority-making decisions at a university. In this chapter, we have some ideas for constituting a visible program that is top of mind when it comes to priority ranking for various university stakeholders. In these recommendations, we attempt to tailor our advice with an eye toward the myriad ways debate teams might be organized within a department, to provide general tips regardless of whether your team is organized in an academic department, student affairs office, or elsewhere in the university. These suggestions supplement the new program development advice given in chapter 8. The chapter begins by exploring the importance of institutional memory and key supporters of collegiate debate programs. Next the chapter explores how to craft appeals to these supporters, using mythic history and a well-crafted pitch. Modes of communication are considered next, followed by strategic recommendations on how to work synergistically, through regular positive messages, and how to prepare for inevitable crisis.

Institutional Memory and the Forensic Program

While we traditionally think of the team in terms of a particular coach or class of involved students, universities are complex organizations with long collective memories. Charlotte Linde (2009) posits the importance of institutional memory, arguing that institutions use narrative to remember their pasts and to construct their present collective identities. Narratives are told and retold throughout time, and such iterative retellings reveal not only an account of the past but also how members of an institution should view themselves and guide their actions and beliefs into the future. Linde writes,

> I study stories in this way because stories are where the action is, both literally and figuratively. Narrative is the discourse unit that presents both what happened, that is, events in the past, and what they mean, that is, the evaluation or moral significance of these events. Taken together, this presentation of the past and its meaning make stories one of the primary means for proposing and negotiating identity, both

> individual and collective identities. There are many ways of constructing who I am, and who we are. (2009, p. 221)

For debate teams, wielding the power of collective identity through a team's institutional memory is a powerful tool for recognition and success within a university.

Prior events that the coach may not know about can influence the reputation of a program. Often, these events may have happened years before current coaches or students were associated with the program. For example, a reckless student at a high school tournament or summer camp can live on in the university memory and affect decisions about the availability of resources allocated to the team. A coach who stays a long time can help to ameliorate these feelings or turn them around, but a new coach can enter an environment that is largely prewritten in ways that are suboptimal.

In other instances, a coach or set of students might be starting a new program that has no narrative presence on its campus. With a new program, the challenge is to craft an account that helps merge the values and outcomes of the program with the mission statement and values of the institution. In both instances, the coach and student are attempting to control the narrative told about the program and why the team is important to the larger university and community. Consequently, a singular message or campaign to tell the story of the program is unlikely to significantly alter stakeholder perceptions of the program's personality or value. Instead, directors should take a systematic and sustained approach to building the reputation of their program as something valuable to the university community.

Stakeholders

Who are internal institutional stakeholders in the program? Stakeholders should be broadly defined as anyone who holds an interest (positive or negative) in the program. These people represent the audience for your team communication. They include obvious people, such as deans and vice presidents, but also include a variety of ancillary characters who have a history and influence over the resources available to the program. They include anyone in the program's chain of command (depending on the structure of the program): vice president or dean of student affairs, dean of the college, chair of the department, and anyone who considers themselves a potential member of the program, current members, or alumni. Another important stakeholder is anyone who has influence in the resources available to the program. This includes (depending on the structure of the program) other student affairs activities that directly compete for resources; members of the department that compete for resources; and other offices that control needed resources, such as the motor pool, financial aid office, student housing and dining, facilities services, and administrative personnel.

Importance of a Mythic History

A program's or team's narrative should be built from or aim to build a mythic history about the group. Organizational communication scholars have long observed the importance of myths in creating and sustaining programs and organizations (Ganzin et al., 2014). In this context, myth is defined as "a narrative that embeds stories about ostensibly historical events that describe a significant person or phenomenon related to societal ideals" (Ganzin et al., 2014, p. 224). For the purposes of discussing a competitive speech or debate program, we can modify this definition to describe a significant person or phenomenon related to the aims and ideals of the university and surrounding community. Mythology is important because it "involves a constituting experience or founding event, an existential interpretation of the event, the institutionalization of the event, and the emergence of social and ethical values as well as a belief system with doctrines and rituals" (Kendall, 1986).

For competitive speech and debate programs, mythic narratives can be created around the establishment of the team, founding or other important coaches and figures, and championships and other significant moments. Additionally, the development of rules or norms of the program can be explained in mythic terms. For instance, George Ziegelmueller at Wayne State University, started a set of five team rules that all started with the letter *D*. Ziegelmueller and the rules became famously associated with the program such that both team members and members of other squads would reference them (Wayne State University Speech & Debate Teams, 2019). Because of the rules' mythic status, they were well respected by students and alumni.

The Audience Working Group at the 2021 National Debate Development Conference generated a list of sources to create a mythos about the origins and critical moments in a team's history. Sources of mythic narrative building include creating and sharing team yearbooks, having a "team historian" who manages the yearbooks and newsletters, and including mythic materials in squad rooms (e.g., banners with themes, important trophies, plaques, or objects). A school building can become associated with a program, adding to its mythic status. The working group also suggested working with school librarians to find archived materials about the program, which can be used as part of the myth-building process. Lastly, program directors and coaches should interview alumni and current students to create an oral history of the program, as much of the legacy and importance of a program is best captured in the oral stories that the students and alumni tell.

What Is the Pitch?

To most program directors, the most obvious pitch to sell the value of the program to administrators and other stakeholders is the success of the team. However, as one former director rightly noted, "No coach is holding a shoe contract at the end of a season." A director's estimation of the value of a single tournament or season record is probably overvalued. While it is the goal of most coaches to win as often as possible, this goal occurs in a matrix of goals that universities use when they evaluate programs. As one university public information officer noted, there are lots of programs that produce pictures of happy kids with a trophy.

Additionally, focusing exclusively on the win-loss metric holds potential risks. In an instance when you have exceptional teams that take years to develop, the number of "successful" years is likely to be balanced with a number of "less successful" years when young competitors are developing. The notion that you should improve every year over the year before leads to rising expectations that make average years a disappointment.

Consequently, it is best to think of the program in terms of the needs and mission of the university or division. These are most explicitly laid out in "strategic plans" produced by the administration every few years. These may be part of a university or college initiative that attempts to explain where the university or college is going and how it will get there. Rarely do these initiatives indicate that the forensics program will win tournaments. Instead, they articulate larger goals such as recruitment and retention, attainment of defined student learning outcomes, increasing diversity, or engagement.

Vice presidents, deans, and department chairs are required to write periodic updates on programs that advance the strategic goals of the organization, which creates a vibrant market for material that can be copied and pasted into university documents. If these are the things the university expressly values, they are the currency of university life.

Methods of Communication

The simplest and most straightforward method of communication is a regular and predictable newsletter that is widely distributed to stakeholders. While the newsletter should contain reports of the program's successes, it should also report descriptive information about the overall program. Reports on the number of members who traveled, stories about their background, and statistics that articulate with university strategic outcomes are more valuable than win-lose records in making the program appear to be an institutional citizen of the department, division, or university.

The director or coach should give regular reports at in-person meetings to give a face to the program, to announce upcoming events, and to thank supporters. It is easy to think of the forensic program as an appendage to the university structure. However, much of this is self-imposed. It is appropriate to seek out invitations to faculty workshops, department meetings, and administrative meetings. It is especially so if they are done systematically as part of the regular order of business. While these types of announcements are short (generally giving a shout-out to the competitors and those who have been especially helpful to the program), they also advertise that the program does useful and important things in the world.

Programs should increase engagement with stakeholders through participation in public debates, open practice debates, or debate support awards. These activities are particularly important with alumni, especially in a world where you may not personally know many of them. Often, it is alumni whom you did not know or who seemed to be marginal to the program that end up being most invested in the program when it comes to making contributions to its success. To believe that the value of the program lies only with the most successful competitors is to undervalue alumni investment.

One of the easiest ways to give visibility to your program is to develop a mythic history. While we tend to think of programs in terms of the life span of a particular director or style of competition, the fact is that debate has probably been part of the university mission for a much longer time. In fact, for many older universities, debate clubs were one of the first means of student engagement with extracurricular programs that predate the modern Greek fraternity or sorority system. Additionally, at many universities, the liberal arts of public speaking occupied a central place in the mission of the institution. Consequently, there is a long history of competitive speaking events that provides a heritage for the modern program. Appropriating this history as part of the contemporary program by taking the name of a historic club or writing a mythic history and celebrating team alumni and supporters gives the team an intellectual weight and centrality that is greater than one might suspect and makes raids on the program a matter of assaulting the university's heritage, identity, and brand rather than a simple cost savings.

Another way to make a program visible is to sponsor campus events. Typically, we conceptualize these as public debates. However, there are many more ways of making a program visible. While it is simple to host one-off events such as election-debate watch parties or inviting a competitor squad to perform a public debate, it is even simpler to go in with other groups to sponsor their events. Sometimes it is as simple as lending the team's name to the event in the hopes that an audience will show or contributing some snacks to the event. But helping to sponsor the university's diversity celebration or a controversial play is a way to make the squad into a thing that does more than just travel students to competitions.

Part of being visible is anticipating that people want to know about the program and what it does. It is possible to drive demand for information about the program. Producing content that actively explains the scope and goals of the program helps to create opportunities to tell people about the program. It is worthwhile to produce informational material (e.g., short videos or talking points sheets, information cards) that are widely distributed to people who interact with early undergraduates or are involved in university recruitment. Such easy-to-access material is also helpful in driving information about the program, since universities are always in need of readily available social media content.

Working Synergistically within the University

The easiest students to recruit are students who are already committed to the university. Therefore, it is good practice to annually brief the university recruitment team about the goals, scope, and notables of the squad. Recruitment professionals are always looking for an angle to distinguish their program from the myriad of competing programs. Having the forensics program top of mind is a good way to increase the number of potential competitors recruited to campus. Being mindful that high school debate events also can serve as recruiting events, directors should invite some of the university recruitment team to a tournament as an effective way of working with admissions and maintaining a top-of-mind place.

Finally, it is important to conceptualize the forensics program as a vibrant part of the university community. Making lots of weak connections between units is a good way to build political capital and to solve material problems. Such weak connections can be built most easily through committee work by faculty and students. Developing working relationships with university administrators (before there is a crisis) will pay dividends. Many committees directly benefit the debate program (admissions office, student life committee, honors program, or hiring committees for new administrators). Serving on committees is also one of the best ways to see trouble coming before it arrives at the program's door.

Working synergistically with other university offices or resources is not the sole responsibility of the head coach. Rather, all members of the team can forge or maintain relationships with student groups or other departments. These members include assistant coaches who are probably members of the same department as the head coach, graduate students who may or not be affiliated with the home department of the team, and undergraduate members who probably have many connections with other departments, colleges, and groups in student affairs. Utilize these connections and the diversity of the team to promote the team and strengthen organic relationships throughout the university.

Constant Positive Communication and Administrative Change

John Gottman, James Coan, Sybil Carrere, and Catherine Swanson (1998) argue that good relationships must maintain a 5:1 ratio of good communication events to bad communication events. That is, for every piece of bad information, there must be five offsetting pieces of positive information to sustain a long-term healthy relationship. If stakeholders only hear from the director when things are going poorly (e.g., when a student has an insufficient GPA or some incident has occurred), it is unlikely that the program will have the political capital to survive when competitive resource decisions are made. Therefore, it is essential that a program offer multiple, systematic, and disciplined reports of good news to offset inevitable problems.

Additionally, administrators leave positions at a greater frequency now than in any previous time in history. It is no longer reasonable to assume that a program is immune to administrative turnover and the attendant changes to university strategic aims. Each time there is a change in the chain of command, the director needs to introduce themselves to the new administration. It is important to go in believing that the new leadership team has little knowledge of the program, its elements, and its history. Therefore, it is essential to be proactive and prepared for inevitable and sometimes radical changes in the leadership landscape.

Prepare for Inevitable Crises

Crises are inevitable. Some are the kind that you can anticipate, such a budget cutback or drops in rates of participation or success. These are the kinds of problems that a strong public information campaign and political capital are designed to thwart.

However, in every program, there are crises that are unplanned and unforeseen: students act up on a trip, a car accident happens, or complaints are received by your dean from competitors. These extreme events can also be managed with careful preparation. Timothy Coombs (2014) proposes that crises are inevitable in complex organizations. Having a plan to deal with inevitable crises helps to create the conditions where they can be managed and the impact mitigated.

The Institute for Public Relations (2007) argues that postcrisis communication should include the following three steps: “Deliver all information promised to stakeholders as soon as that information is known; keep stakeholders updated on the progression of recovery efforts including any corrective measures being taken and the progress of investigations; analyze the crisis management effort for lessons and integrate those lessons into the organization’s crisis management system.” However, in many instances, you can anticipate a crisis in its early stages before it becomes known by stakeholders. In those instances, it is useful to communicate to your immediate supervisors as soon as possible the issues and what actions you have taken so far to preempt a situation from becoming an unforeseen crisis.

One crisis that many programs experience is the death of notable alumni. Directors should stay in regular contact with alumni and set up Google alerts or scan the internet for any obituary notices about alumni. When a death happens, reach out to the family of the deceased to see if any arrangements have been made or if they would like the team to participate or hold its own memorial event. At a minimum, the director should attend the funeral. Beyond that measure, the director should consult with chairs or deans about additional commemorative actions, such as hosting an event or naming a tournament or event after the deceased.

Conclusion

Internal university stakeholders are a vital resource for any collegiate debate program. Making wise strategic choices about regular communication with these stakeholders is critical to the longevity of any debate program. If a director is savvy in this communication, even when faced with unexpected crisis or negative perceptions of the program or intercollegiate debate more generally, the program will survive.

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Part IV

Equity and Topic Reforms

11

Equity in British Parliamentary Debate

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Introduction

Writing about diversity work in the context of universities in the United Kingdom, the scholar Sara Ahmed (2012) argues that understanding institutional diversity work requires consideration of how commitments can function as "non-performatives" (p. 177). Ahmed is particularly interested in the way that legal requirements to address racism in the UK resulted in the production of documents that largely failed to produce meaningful institutional change because "the ease or easiness in which diversity becomes description shows how diversity can be a way of not doing anything: if we take saying diversity as if it is doing diversity, then saying diversity can be a way of not doing diversity" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 121). In the context of the United States, perhaps this observation can be extended to the recent interest in "equity policies," as expressions of institutions' commitment to equity risks becoming a belief that we are "doing equity." However, the much more challenging work of making our institutions equitable becomes little more than a non-performative commitment.

At the United States Universities Debating (USUD) Championship in 2021, this paradox emerged in technicolor. Following the sixth preliminary debate at the championship, the Morehouse College debate team issued a statement, which I believe deserves to be archived here in its entirety:

> OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE MOREHOUSE COLLEGE SPEECH AND DEBATE TEAM REGARDING PENN USUDC 2021
>
> It is with great solemnity that the Morehouse College Speech and Debate Team is no longer engaging with or competing further in the Penn USUDC 2021. We are by no means new to the BP circuit having competed on the U.S. and the international circuit for the past decade and having formerly hosted USUDC in 2016. As such, we looked forward to competing this weekend, even with the online format necessitated by this current pandemic. However, after experiencing issues of anti-Blackness, and ableism by extension, at this tournament to a worrying extent we can no longer continue to compete and support the tournament in good conscience.
>
> Consistently, we have been the only Black debaters present in our rooms. As one of the only Historically Black Colleges that competes in this space, we are used to this—especially with a debate space that struggles with true representation. However, there is no excuse for the events of this tournament. We have experienced a constant attitude of dismissal from both debaters and the judging pool as it relates to us as Black people, which has been especially disconcerting and traumatic. This becomes exacerbated when debaters engage in the elitist mocking and caricaturing of Black debaters' tonality and speech before then being rewarded by panels on the round calls. It becomes worse when there is an implicit bias on the attitudinal level of chairs and panels in explaining round decisions, sending the signal

> that argumentation posited by Black debaters is worth only the most surface level of engagement and weighing.
>
> We have brought our concerns to equity, and while they have been verbally understanding concerning the trauma endured at this tournament, their responses to issues from previous rounds have been restricted to general announcements. There is no larger dialogue that we have seen with problematic panelists or chairs, and our complaint centering around the experience of our debaters in the fifth round, which caused great emotional harm, went unaddressed when it was promised that another "general announcement" would be made. The announcements prior to round 6 were devoid of the promised equity statement surrounding our concerns—only speaking in regard to the issue of this tournament's "trainee status" categorization.
>
> It is unclear to us why this issue being addressed precludes addressing the concerns of Black debaters. It sends the message that in an effort to remain on schedule, this tournament's organizers find it acceptable to confront anti-Blackness "when time permits." Immediately addressing the issues and marginalization that Black debaters face in round is not an issue that can wait for any period of time. We are sure equity will make some future statements concerning the generalizations, anti-Blackness, and marginalization debaters have faced in round; however, unlike this tournament's coordinators, we refuse to wait for the sake of remaining on schedule. We invite the adjudication team and equity team as well as the debating community writ large to interrogate the nature of their biases—explicit or implicit, and to engage in conversations that prevent the perennial anti-Blackness our debaters have to experience at tournaments like these for the sake of bettering the activity as a whole. However, until that conversation happens in an earnest and accountable manner, publicly and privately in all of the ways that it needs to happen, Morehouse will not be debating further here.

In the hours following Morehouse's public announcement, the tournament quickly halted, as several teams issued similar commitments in solidarity with Morehouse College. A forum was held, in which many debaters of color expressed similar anger at their treatment in debate generally, the USUDC specifically, and the United States more broadly. Critically, these statements are nothing new. Debaters of color, particularly Black debaters, have been talking about discrimination and unequitable treatment within the broader debate community for many years (Kraft, 2014). Research in intercollegiate debate has noted a severe lack of demographic diversity and problems caused by discrimination (Stepp & Gardner, 2001; Szwapa, 1994. However, what is notable about this incident is that it resulted in the cancellation of the rest of the USUDC, effectively ending the tournament before the seventh round of preliminary debates. We are not familiar with a similar example of a national tournament being canceled following calls to recognize structural discrimination.

Morehouse's statement draws attention to Ahmed's arguments that claims of diversity are insufficient to create diverse conditions. For instance, the statement notes, "We have brought our concerns to equity, and while they have been verbally understanding concerning the trauma endured at this tournament, their responses to issues from previous rounds have been restricted. . . . There is no larger dialogue . . . and our complaint centering around the experience of our debaters in the fifth round, which caused great emotional harm, went unaddressed." The cancellation of the tournament serves as an important reminder that anti-Blackness, anti-Indigenousness, and white supremacy operate within the debate space, much like all spaces inside societies that are structured with these different manifestations of racism. This reality should lead us to reflect on equity in our communities and remember that in order to allow our commitments in documents to become more than just non-performatives, actions must be taken to make equity more than just one more check box (Ahmed, 2012).

While this incident served as a serious exigence and had ramifications that exceed those typically seen in debate events, it is certainly not an isolated event. Indeed, every form of debate and speech activity experiences similar problems. Thus, the assumption that this experience is unique to British Parliamentary debate is misguided, and the fact that this event culminated in cancellation of the tournament does not mark this format as exceptionally problematic. Previous championships have been delayed due to equity complaints, and the decision by several institutions to forgo competition at the 2021 event speaks to the seriousness with which community members now consider the issue of equity.

Each of these instances should justify serious consideration of equity issues in debate. However, these moments are typically treated as problems between individuals, removing the pressure from organizations to treat these serious equity concerns in a systematic way. This is not to say that debate writ large ignores these issues—quite the opposite: these concerns are subjected to regular and lively discussion, both inside and outside individual debate rounds. Further, on the international circuit, we see a focus on the inequities in participation, advancement, and hosting (Pierson, 2013). At the same time, the fact that these problems continue to occur should clearly signal the need for more serious interrogation of our practices.

One factor that made this year's championship different was that the tournament was conducted online using the voice over internet protocol Discord. While synchronous online debate can be beneficial in increasing access, there is increasing concern that it creates its own set of equity concerns, and remote debate through platforms such as Discord may significantly exacerbate current problems and increase obstacles in equity complaint resolution. While systematic study of the relationship between remote competition and equity violations is far beyond the scope of this chapter, the anonymity created by remote platforms, through the ability to turn off microphones and cameras at will and anonymous chat, and the heightened pressures created by a global pandemic, quarantine fatigue, competition, and associated stressors undoubtedly contributed to the situation.

In this chapter, we do not plan to offer prescriptions regarding what should be done to solve these issues, because the work of bringing our aspirations into line with our actions is going to require collaboration across organizations and individual programs, and global recommendations are not likely to be able to address these ongoing problems. Rather, we offer exploration of the problems and identify what work has already taken place to provide a basis for localized action.

Exploration of Equity Practices

We first explored how equity practices are outlined in British Parliamentary debate. To do so, we examined a set of equity documents generated for the United States Universities Debating Championship (USUDC), the World University Debating Championship (WUDC), and the European Universities Debate Championship (EUDC), looking for both common features and those that failed to transition clearly between years or organizations. An abbreviated sample of these documents and their key features is summarized in table 11.1.

Table 11.1. Sample of Equity Policy Documents Analyzed

Sample of equity policy documents analyzed	WUDC 2017	USUDC 2016	USUDC 2019
Thesis of purpose	Provide tournament free of discrimination, harassment, and bullying and fosters DEI	To protect from malicious intent and foster empathy and community	Maintaining and promoting accessibility
Equity team's role statement	Powers outlined in WUDC constitution		
People covered	All participants and observers	All participants	All participants and any other attendees
Locations applied	Tournament, events, transportation, lodging, social media	Any location related to tournament	Tournament, events, transportation, lodging, social media
Focus on mediation	No, but an option decided by complainant	No, but an option based on equity team determination	Yes
Punitive	Possible	Yes	Possible
Equity team will investigate all complaints	No	Exceptions listed	Yes
Scope	Upholding code of conduct; support for legal complaint	Review of motions prior to announcement	Conduct, discriminatory behavior, sexual interactions, pronouns
Council and constitution coordination	Yes	N/A	N/A
Organizational equity officers	Yes, for appeals	No	No
Policy on gender pronouns	Explicit and deliberate introductions; neutral default	No	Opportunity to share required
Policy on missing rounds for reasons	No	No	
Number of clashes made against adjudicators	May be response to complaint		
Preventative measures	Code of conduct signed	None	Team leaders communicate policy; tournament officials also read host policy and implicit bias
Description and scope of enthusiastic consent	Extensive, required	None	Extensive, required

Sample of equity policy documents analyzed	WUDC 2017	USUDC 2016	USUDC 2019
Chair judges	Responsible for upholding pronoun policy	No direction	Unique actions: look at substance, not style
In-round violations: direction for judges	Comment on language between speeches to enforce order; comment during adjudication	No direction	Do not interrupt speeches; recognize during oral adjudication
Institutional role	Institutional equity officers possible, but does not replace policy	None	None
Reporting/response process	Complaints to equity team, investigation determined by complainant; informal or formal, formal must be in writing, email or equity box; 2+ members of equity will complete investigations	Complaints to equity team; direct, phone, equity box	Intervening when comfortable, contacting security; apologizing, discreet and involved complaints to equity team; direct, Google form, equity box
Resolution mechanisms	Discussion, warning, request apology, mediate, clashes, recommendations to organizations (reporting to law or institution, removal, future prohibition)	Mediation if equity team determines there was not a violation; investigation, warning, apology, removal from events and/or tournament	One-on-one conversation, mediated conversations, apology request, general announcement, formal warning, removal from events, recommended prohibition from future events, contacting law enforcement
Statement on jurisdiction	Code of conduct	Host institution code of conduct in addition to policy	Host institution policies and laws apply first, punitive measures decided by whole equity team and conveners collectively
Appeals mechanism	Appeals committee separate; decisions final; appeals committee is convener, Chief Adjudication team member, and worlds council equity officer	No	First speak with equity, then conveners

Here we see that documents have been created, reviewed, and amended to cover a range of equity concerns but that the creation of these documents has failed to effect the systemic change required to make the activity significantly more equitable. That is not to say that equity policy is useless, but we see repeated and increasingly expansive guidelines, many of which are generally agreed on in the community, without a correlated drop in equity complaints. Guidelines are often taken from previous policies that were considered successful. However, "success" means "outline policy" rather than effect change. Therefore, these organizations were "doing equity" in Ahmed's non-performative sense.

Problems with Current Equity Practices

Next, we compared and discussed some identified problems with current equity practice.

At the 2021 National Debate Development Conference, we discussed the problem and background literature, as well as the ongoing discussions in other venues. We participated in additional student, coach, and institutional working groups and read online responses to the events at Penn USUDC. One of us has also served as an equity officer on multiple occasions since the events at Penn USUDC. We also looked at documents posted to social media that attempted to address the equity concerns. Our observation, discussion, and analysis produced a series of additional points that require further research.

There are various stakeholders in university-level debate competition, and these groups hold vastly different perspectives on the problems and potential solutions to equity issues. One identified concern is that the immediate rush to find solutions after the Penn USUDC, which occurred within several different factions of the community, produced contradictory suggestions. One source of tension is the differences between equity norms inside and outside the United States. For example, outside the United States and in many student-run programs within the United States, equity teams are often made up of current or recent students, possibly with no formal equity training or institutional and legal accountability. This is a complaint that has been repeatedly raised in coaches' meetings and other equity forums. The concern is not only that there is little accountability but that this situation creates fairness and equity problems for the equity team members themselves. Students are being put in a difficult position and given high levels of responsibility that require emotional labor, but without adequate training, preparation, or enforcement powers. Additionally, when the equity team members are chosen, students are often selected based primarily on their own identity, placing the burden on already-taxed communities. During application-based decisions to compose an equity team, financial concerns of the tournament sometimes preclude choosing team members who require higher levels of financial assistance, which may exclude some marginalized applicants.

Another cause of tension is the degree of authority placed on the equity team and the required size of the team. There are several calls for increased equity authority over judge and team elimination, breaks, motions, judge allocation, and status within the tournament hierarchy. Until recently, community members have expressed concern with equity team overreach and significant overlap with the Chief Adjudication (CA) team duties, which has the potential to produce further inequity issues. One of the factors involved in the Penn USUDC situation was the combination of handling of judge trainee status and allocation of responsibilities between equity and the CA teams. Larger equity teams help to produce timely responses to complaints; however, they also pose problems with consistency and team coherence, and it is not feasible to adequately train several officers. Part of the delay in handling the Morehouse complaint involved flawed prioritization and difficulty in coordinating communication between numerous equity team members. These problems probably were compounded by dynamics created by the presence of student team members rather than faculty members and selectivity in handling coach and judge complaints, highlighting the complicated intersection of accountability, authority, qualification, and training in equity environments.

Another noted problem is that the participants whom equity teams are trying to help are disproportionately the targets of equity complaints. Comments, courtesies, and facial expressions made by international and BIPOC speakers are often brought forward as evidence of equity offenses. While there certainly can be legitimate complaints, some groups routinely may be held to different standards or may more frequently be involved in cultural miscommunications. Additionally, punitive action as the result of equity complaints may subject these groups to even more harm. For example, judge allocation and demotion based on equity complaints could very well be problematic in a world where judges from less represented communities receive most equity complaints. We have seen this play out in the research regarding strikes and mutually preferred judging in other formats (e.g., Decker & Morello, 1984), where white male-identifying judges have been both more represented in the pool and more preferred by debaters.

There have been several suggested solutions that, while potentially useful, may simply not be feasible given the current structure of tournaments. Most require significantly more time and resources from equity officers, who are often stretched thin. There seems to be consensus that training needs to be significantly expanded, but it remains unclear who is qualified to provide such training. Further, the community needs to determine the purpose of the equity team and whether it is simply a student support role, an ombudsperson, or a qualified agent with enforcement and accountability. What we as a community want from equity still needs consideration and agreement, and then we can work to improve our practices from there.

The British Parliamentary debate format continues to face challenges with equity at its tournaments, but there is hope in efforts to produce best-practice policies that are both inclusive and responsive to practices that need to be changed. Many tournaments, both small and large, prioritize an equity policy that is functional enough to ensure that a tournament runs on time, while also protecting its participants. This endeavor may seem to offer an ideal balance between protecting students and contributing to a successful tournament. However, these policies are problematic in two ways: past policies are not being assessed for efficacy, and those who are in charge of the policies (the equity team) are usually students or recent alumni with limited training. In comparison, faculty and educators have a vested interest in working with complex individuals like students, making them better suited to oversee parts of the equity process (Bartanen, 1995).

Suggested Best Practices

From an educator's perspective, the best solutions may take some time to establish, but they may produce better results. Future equity work should consider the following issues. First, the convener should have at least one faculty member (not necessarily from the host institution) to oversee the equity team but should also include students, so that hosts of smaller tournaments can learn these practices when they host and students feel represented. Second, past policies should be reviewed by all members of the team, looking for redundancy and missing elements or factors, thus creating one document that is inclusive. Third, there must be adequate time before the tournament so that coaches can have all participants review the policy and discuss it. Fourth, before the tournament, videos with applicable pedagogy regarding the equity policy should be required viewing for all participants. This would allow tournament announcements and a host of other important details about the tournament (e.g., English as a second language / English as a foreign language and novice debate instructions) to be included. Fifth, the faculty member should work with the host institution's administration to note important host policies. Sixth, the equity team must have a good working relationship with the CA team but maintain its independence. Seventh, the equity leader must have a relationship with the convener and visit the host institution and its facilities before the actual tournament. Eighth, the equity leader must have frequent meetings with the CA and host to go over every detail of the tournament.

The minutiae of the tournament and how the equity team functions within the intricacies of the competitive event will depend on clearly defining the expectations for the equity team, recognizing that these need to vary from tournament to tournament given the unique nature of different types of competitions. Assessment of equity is ongoing, and we see this discussion as a start toward creating better practices. What we would caution community members to avoid is the assumption that even very well considered and crafted documents are a replacement for or accomplish the work of actual equity.

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12

Topic Selection Process Reform

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Introduction

The Topics Working Group was tasked with analyzing the current topic selection process outlined in the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) bylaws and proposing a set of reforms to address any identified problems. From the outset, there was unanimity among the participants (including several past and present members of the Topic Committee) that the current process not only is beset by a set of recurring, interrelated problems that overly burden both authors and Topic Committee members but also has trouble producing debatable and engaging topics. However, we feel that it is important to declare publicly at the outset that the current rules and structures governing the topic process are at fault and not the hardworking authors and Topic Committee members.

The working group identified several areas in need of reform: the topic selection calendar; the division of labor between the Topic Committee and the paper authors; and the requirement of topic rotation. In response to these problems, we propose an amendment altering the topic calendar and process generally, accompanied by an explanatory essay in defense of the change; an amendment changing the language of the topic rotation requirements, also followed by an explanatory essay; and a proposed set of guidelines for use by the Topic Committee in future cycles.

The first part of this chapter identifies three problems with the current topic selection calendar and distribution of labor to create topic papers and resolution wording. In response, this chapter explains how the proposed amendment addresses each of these concerns. The proposed topic calendar reform amendment suggests converting the current topic rotation into a checklist. In this model, each topic area must be debated at least once every four years; but a single topic may count for more than one area, and each area can be counted more than once per cycle. The next part of the chapter about topic rotation reform builds on the guidelines issued by the 2020 and 2021 Topic Committees and adapts them to the new topic calendar reform model proposed in this chapter.

The Case for Topic Calendar Reform

CHALLENGES WITH THE CURRENT MODEL

The topic selection process is one of the most important parts of the CEDA/National Debate Tournament (NDT) policy debate season. Although many members of the debate community enjoy summer vacation and a reprieve from the stresses of competition during these pivotal weeks in April, May, and June, the decisions made during the topic selection process will ripple throughout the season to come and influence the content of thousands of debates. Despite the importance of the process and the challenges associated with constructing and selecting debate resolutions that can sustain a year of debates, current CEDA/NDT policies do not optimally position participants in the topic selection process to succeed. The process as currently structured places overly burdensome demands on nearly every participant in the process. During the 2021 National Debate Development Conference hosted by the American Forensics Association (AFA), the Topic Working Group identified several issues with the current topic selection process. Specifically, the working group determined that the current topic selection process suffers from (1) severe time constraints, (2) a lack of topic proposal paper submissions, and (3) a failure to include all relevant stakeholders.

The first challenge confronting the debate community is the "calendar crunch." The current process places large demands on the Topic Committee members that must be met within a compressed time frame. The entire topic selection process currently comprises about three months in the spring and summer. For instance, in 2021, topic proposal papers were due on April 24, and the winning topic proposal (antitrust) was announced on May 16 after two weeks of voting. After another round of voting on the slate of potential resolutions crafted by the committee, the final resolution for the upcoming season was announced in July.

Crucially, the slate of resolutions that the community votes on to decide the final resolution for the season is crafted over the course of three grueling days in June, when the Topic Committee convenes to research, construct, and vet resolutions. It is difficult to overstate the difficulty of this task for members of the Topic Committee and the broader debate community. The committee members are first required to study the winning topic proposal paper closely and brainstorm ways to develop resolutions that have fidelity to the intentions of the author(s). This requires reading large volumes of topic literature to discover key terms of art as well as obtaining a clear picture of the balance of affirmative and negative arguments. When topic proposal papers only discuss potential wordings in a cursory manner, the Topic Committee is left with the unenviable task of conducting preliminary research on key terms and phrases and then also constructing multiple potential resolutions while operating under tight deadlines. Although this work may be simpler if the winning topic area involves a tried-and-true theme that the community has debated in the recent past (e.g., military policy, climate change, or energy policy), this is especially difficult when the committee is tasked with crafting resolutions in a relatively new or unfamiliar topic area. In any case, the Topic Committee must assemble a diverse slate of balanced and workable resolution wordings that honor the spirit of the winning topic proposal paper over the course of just three days in June. These three days will shape the upcoming season significantly. In contrast, a journal article of similar length and quality would normally require about a year between the completion of the first draft and final acceptance. A year of work simply cannot be compressed into three days, no matter how efficient and knowledgeable the committee members might be.

A second challenge relates to the lack of incentives to write a topic proposal paper. Only five proposal papers were submitted for the 2021–2022 season (antitrust, climate change, economic inequality, labor rights, and transportation infrastructure), a low number compared to previous cycles. Although the low number of submissions probably stems in part from the unique challenges of the 2020–2021 season due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the current topic selection process is not optimally designed to encourage topic proposal submissions. Currently, writing a topic paper proposal is an arduous and often thankless task that involves devoting precious time after a long competitive season, which overlaps with final examinations and the end of the semester, to research a potential topic that may very well not be selected by the debate community or even included on the final controversy area ballot. To give the debate community a full menu of options to choose from, something needs to be done to encourage additional submissions. Presently, the only incentive to write a topic proposal paper is the prospect of authoring the winning paper. Unfortunately, only one topic paper proposal can win. To encourage the creation and submission of more topic proposal papers, the community should find a way to make this process worthwhile for those authors whose proposal papers are not selected.

A third problem with the topic process is that it does not adequately include and incorporate the voices of all stakeholders. Strides have been taken to make the Topic Committee's deliberations more transparent and accessible, but there is still work to be done. Although there are sporadic conversations about the merits of various topic options between members of the debate community on social media platforms such as Facebook, opportunities for sustained discussion about the upcoming topic are rare. Reforms to the current topic process are needed to create more points of contact between the various stakeholders in the topic selection process and to give topic proposal paper authors and the Topic Committee a platform to make arguments for and against certain proposals.

We view these three challenges as interconnected and interrelated, necessitating comprehensive solutions that are commensurate with the scale of the problems. To remedy these issues, we propose an amendment to the CEDA bylaws to overhaul the topic selection process. Specifically, we propose a revamped process with an elongated time frame that draws inspiration from the "revise and resubmit" process of academic journals and creates additional incentives for submitting and discussing topic proposal papers. In the next section of this chapter, we provide our proposal for topic process change and explain how it addresses the three problems we have outlined. In doing so, we hope to explain the rationale underpinning this amendment to the debate community and demonstrate its worthiness for inclusion in CEDA bylaws.

PROPOSED TOPIC CALENDAR REFORM AMENDMENT

Bylaw IV, Section 2, is hereby repealed and amended with the following text:

Section Two: Topic Selection Process

1. Role of the Topic Committee. The primary tasks of the Topic Committee shall be to:

a. solicit, review, and advise Topic Area Papers and Topic Wording Papers on a continuing basis.

b. establish ad hoc advisory panels to assist authors with research.

c. organize regular opportunities for paper authors to present area and wording papers as outlined in IV.2.

d. select slates of Topic Area Papers and Topic Wording Papers to be voted upon by the general membership.

2. Topic Selection Calendar

a. The topic selection process shall be divided into two phases: a Topic Area Phase from July through January and a Topic Wording Phase from February through June.

b. Topic Area Phase

i. Topic area abstracts of 250–500 words shall be submitted to the Topic Committee by the third Friday in July.

ii. Topic Area Paper rough drafts shall be submitted to the Topic Committee for review by early November.

iii. In November and December, at least two opportunities shall be scheduled for Topic Area Paper authors to present and answer questions about their papers in a public setting. At least one opportunity shall be a panel presentation at the annual NCA Convention, and at least one opportunity shall occur on a weekday night.

iv. Topic Area Paper final drafts shall be submitted to the Topic Committee in mid-January.

v. The Topic Committee shall report to the Executive Secretary by the end of January no fewer than three Topic Area Papers to be voted upon by the general membership.

vi. Voting by the general membership shall occur during early February.

c. Topic Wording Phase

i. After the selection of a winning Topic Area Paper, the Topic Committee shall publicly solicit Topic Wording Papers.

ii. Topic Wording Paper rough drafts shall be submitted to the Topic Committee by the end of April.

iii. Topic Wording Paper final drafts shall be submitted to the Topic Committee by the end of May.

iv. The Topic Committee shall report to the Executive Secretary by early July no fewer than three resolutions corresponding to three Topic Wording Papers to be voted upon by the general membership. The author of the selected Topic Area Paper shall be entitled to choose at least one resolution on the final slate.

3. Topic Area and Wording Paper Selection

a. By June, the Topic Committee shall issue general guidelines for Topic Area and Topic Wording Papers. These guidelines should include any requirements necessitated by topic rotation. The Topic Committee may issue supplemental guidelines from time to time as it deems necessary.

b. The Topic Committee shall inform paper authors at the rough-draft stage if there are any issues or problems that would prevent a paper from being placed on a slate for balloting so that authors can revise, resubmit, and respond to any stated concerns.

RATIONALE FOR PROPOSED REFORMS

In recommending this amendment, our goals include making the topic selection process easier for all relevant stakeholders by mitigating the calendar crunch and redistributing the workload more evenly across the debate community, in contrast to the current model, which demands a herculean effort from the Topic Committee over just a few days in June. In addition, we sought to create additional incentives for community members to write and submit topic proposal papers while revitalizing community discussions that occur around these papers.

In drafting this proposal, we sought to bring the topic selection process into closer alignment with the "revise and resubmit" process that is common at academic journals and to transform the Topic Committee into an entity that more closely resembles the editorial board of a journal, whose main task is to advise and support authors rather than to do the work of writing the articles themselves. In the current process, the Topic Committee members serve as content creators by researching and constructing potential resolution wordings for community selection. We imagine the role of the committee members moving away from that of a creator and instead moving in the direction of that of a critic, evaluator, or reviewer. We hope that a longer time frame for topic selection would create more opportunities for the committee members to give constructive feedback to topic proposal paper authors. In recent years, authors have voiced frustration when their papers are excluded from the controversy area ballot. In the proposed topic selection process outlined here, authors would be given a chance to respond to and account for the Topic Committee's feedback and improve their paper to make it ready for the ballot. In what follows, we explain three key components of our proposed amendment.

AN EXTENDED TIMELINE FOR TOPIC SELECTION

To address the calendar crunch problem, we propose an extended topic selection process that occurs over the course of a year rather than several months. Whereas the CEDA/NDT topic selection process for the 2021–2022 season began in April 2021 and ended in July 2021, we envision a reformed process beginning in July of one year and concluding in the following July. A slower, more drawn-out approach to topic selection is not untested but rather bears resemblance to the process currently used to select the yearly high school policy debate resolution (National Federation of State High School Associations, 2008). In the current college process, topic proposal authors barely have an opportunity to catch their breath from the conclusion of the previous debate season in March or early April before committing enormous time and energy to writing a proposal paper that is due by the end of April, during a hectic time at the end of an academic semester. In our proposed timeline, authors would be afforded more time to gather their thoughts and produce a quality product. Topic paper abstracts would be due in July. After authors have received feedback on how to improve their proposal from the Topic Committee, they would have until November of that year to write and refine a draft proposal paper.

This process would build up to a series of Fall Topic Paper Panels occurring in November. These panels would give authors an opportunity to present their ideas to the debate community to receive even more community feedback and input. We envision CEDA/NDT offering at least two Topic Paper Panel options. One panel could be hosted at the National Communication Association's annual convention. For those who are unable to participate or are uninterested in NCA, an alternative panel could be hosted by the American Forensic Association. At these panels, community members could raise concerns about proposed topic areas and ask questions of the authors.

Having received feedback from both the Topic Committee and the debate community, authors would have until mid-January to produce a final paper that contains a provisional, favored resolution wording. After receiving these revised topic proposal papers, the Topic Committee would be responsible for assembling a slate of topic area options for community selection. After conducting a vote, the winning topic area would be announced later in January or February.

Our proposed timeline differs significantly from the current timeline in that it contains a separate stage of the topic selection process devoted entirely to generating resolution wording papers. During the topic selection process for the 2021–2022 season, resolution wordings were developed during the Topic Committee's annual meetings on June 1–3. In a reformed timeline, this process would occur over the course of several months. After the selection of a topic area, the committee's attention would turn to soliciting and evaluating resolution wording papers. Members of the debate community would have from February until April to develop and submit first drafts of wording papers that would be due in late April. The Topic Committee would then offer suggestions for authors to address in revised final drafts of wording papers that would be due in May. The rest of the topic selection process would resemble the current process. The Topic Committee would convene in June with the goal of creating a final slate of resolutions to be voted on, but with significant work already completed by the wording paper authors. The Topic Committee meeting, instead of being a scramble to research and construct a slate of options, would be focused on selecting the wordings that were already produced by the community. In July, the topic for the upcoming season would be announced after a vote is conducted, and the cycle would begin anew with another round of topic proposal abstracts for the next season due later that month.

One concern raised about our proposal is that an elongated timeline for topic selection would not solve issues with the topic process. This is a valid concern; being a debate coach or a debater is often a year-round job, and, for some people, the months of September and November can be just as busy as March and April. However, we believe our proposed amendment does address the calendar crunch concern. By spreading the various deadlines out across an entire year rather than a few weeks, the probability increases that prospective authors can set aside time at some point in the year to write a paper. Authors would have August, September, and October to write draft topic paper proposals. After presenting their paper in November at the NCA convention or the AFA alternative, authors would have until January to produce a revised final draft. We believe this elongated process will create more opportunities for the community to become involved with the topic selection process despite our very busy schedules.

INCENTIVES FOR TOPIC PROPOSAL PAPER SUBMISSIONS

Our proposed topic process would create an incentive for additional topic proposal paper submissions. In the current process, the compressed time frame for topic selection is itself a deterrent to participation; individuals and teams are hesitant to devote time to writing and defending a topic proposal paper because the process begins during one of the busiest times of the academic year. The current CEDA/NDT topic selection process asks too much of authors and offers very little in return.

We propose offering additional incentives to prospective authors. The Fall Topic Paper Panels are one such incentive, by creating a professional development opportunity for those who devote their time to writing a topic proposal paper. For community members interested in pursuing an academic career, the opportunity to present their research at the highly competitive and nationally recognized annual NCA convention may prove to be a strong incentive to participate in the topic process. In addition, the Topic Committee leadership would work with the editorial team at CEDA's *Contemporary Argumentation and Debate* journal to arrange for the publication the topic proposal papers within that journal's pages. In the world of academia, publications matter. Transforming the topic selection process into something that can aid one's professional development is a low-cost and effective way to create additional incentives to participate in the process, even if one's proposal is not the eventual winner.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

This reformed topic selection process could lead to richer topic discussions among the community. The proposed amendment creates additional opportunities for community discussions through the creation of Fall Topic Paper Panels and numerous other points of contact between the Topic Committee and authors, supplementing existing discussions that occur on social media and within debate squads. More broadly, by shifting the role of the Topic Committee, our proposal moves power away from the Topic Committee and back into the debate community. We hope that our proposal would foster a more collaborative relationship between the Topic Committee and the broader community.

Input and collaboration would have a vital role under our model. There would be less chance for topic paper authors to feel lost without feedback on how their topic would be received. The Topic Committee and past paper authors could provide advice and insights. Our proposal would not magically give community members more time. By spreading out the process, however, a paper would not have a singular, all-or-nothing attempt at shaping the topic. Instead, authors would get input at the abstract, presentation, and wording stages. Currently, each one of these can feel like a hurdle, as they all can really hurt a paper's chances for selection. Sometimes, a topic can seem doomed from the start with an elevator pitch that fails to capture the community's excitement. Input at the abstract stage would help such papers. Other times, a topic proposal has not adequately demonstrated a controversy that has reasonable ground for argumentative equity for each side. Presentations would be an opportunity to help rectify problems of this nature. Finally, some papers have trouble suggesting resolution wordings. There is a specific time in our topic process dedicated to that. The combination of increased incentives in tandem with the shift of the topic process closer toward a revise-and-resubmit model means a more iterative and gradual process. Authors would gain power in the topic process without undue burden.

In the current process, it is not uncommon for authors to feel frustrated when their paper is deemed not worthy for inclusion on the ballot by the Topic Committee. In our reformed model, the committee's identification of issues with a proposal would be the beginning and not the end of authors' involvement in the topic selection process. Using a revise-and-resubmit process would give authors an opportunity to respond to committee criticisms and improve their proposal. This would in turn lead to additional opportunities for interaction, dialogue, and mentoring.

CONCLUSION

The Topic Working Group's discussions at the 2021 National Debate Development Conference revealed widespread consensus that the current topic selection process needs overhaul. The decisions that the debate community makes about the yearly controversy area and resolution are among the most important decisions the community makes. The importance of these decisions should be reflected in the design of the topic selection process. Instead of compressing this decision-making process into a narrow window between April and June, the debate community should facilitate dialogue over topic options throughout the year. We view this proposed amendment as a starting point for reform and welcome suggestions on how to further improve our proposal and the topic selection process. In addition, it should be noted that if a formal amendment to CEDA bylaws proves too difficult to achieve, there is still considerable latitude for the Topic Committee to informally adopt components of our proposal into the topic selection process. In any case, now is the time to consider modifications to the topic selection process to make it more humane, collaborative, and enticing to prospective authors.

The Case for Topic Rotation Reform

Having students debate topics that are interesting, timely, and distinct across their careers is both vital and challenging to achieve. With that in mind, the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) voted in November 2011 to have topics rotate between a domestic, a legal, and an international topic every four years. Almost ten years after the vote, the American Forensic Association (AFA) held a National Debate Development Conference in the summer of 2021, which included a Topics group. This group of coaches discussed the topic process, including topic rotation. Although the idea behind

Table 12.1. Visualizing the Proposed Topic Calendar

Now

July 23	Aug 23	Sep 23	Oct 23	Nov 23	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24	Apr 24	May 24	June 24	July 24
									TAPs Due	Area Vote	TC Meeting	Wording Vote

New

<table>
<tr><th>Jul 23</th><th>Aug 23</th><th>Sep 23</th><th>Oct 23</th><th>Nov 23</th><th>Dec 23</th><th>Jan 24</th><th>Feb 24</th><th>Mar 24</th><th>Apr 24</th><th>May 24</th><th>June 24</th><th>July 24</th></tr>
<tr><td>Abstracts Due</td><td colspan="3">Work on TAP Drafts</td><td>TAP Presentations</td><td colspan="2">TAP Revisions</td><td colspan="3">Work on TWPs</td><td>TWP Discussion</td><td>TC Meeting</td><td>Wording Vote</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>Area Vote</td><td></td><td></td><td>TWP First Drafts Due</td><td>TWP Final Draft due</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

topic rotation is sound, the ways that topics since the enactment of the rotation amendment over the past eight years have been proposed, researched, and debated indicate that there might be a more opportune way to have students debate topics from differing literature bases without a rotation.

CHALLENGES WITHIN CURRENT ROTATION

Finding criteria for distinguishing between domestic, international, and legal topics has been a challenge. According to CEDA bylaws (2021), which govern the topic selection process used by CEDA, the National Debate Tournament (NDT), and the American Debate Association (ADA), a domestic topic is defined as “a topic that relates to issues within the United States.” A legal topic is defined as “a topic that relates to a controversy within legal jurisprudence and where the topic wording emphasizes legal research.” And an international topic is defined as “a topic of primarily international relations or policy.” These criteria were intended to give students the opportunity to debate four timely topics from distinct types of areas for controversy, with criteria that allowed for some flexibility.

Categorizing a given topic to neatly fall into one of the three categories is quite difficult, however. Although there can be issues of overlap, generally it is easier to differentiate between an international and a domestic topic. An international topic will inevitably intersect with domestic issues, and vice versa, even in a slight, tangential way. However, the legal category is not conducive to neat division. Within the definition of a legal topic in the bylaws is the notion of a “topic wording emphasiz[ing] legal research.” On any of the past eight topics, teams have researched and introduced evidence from law review articles and engaged in other forms of legal inquiry. Furthermore, on any topic, there are strategic benefits to crafting arguments like, for example, a court affirmative or counterplan that uses a specific legal process, all of which require accessing legal scholarship. The best topicality cards often come from law reviews regardless of topic type. Even international topics often include discussions of international law that require teams to conduct legal research.

Conversely, there have been legal topics that seemed hard-pressed to “emphasize legal research.” Thanks to the hard work of topic paper authors and the Topic Committee, the executive authority and legalization topics explored important controversies that promoted student learning. Yet, neither of those controversies emphasized legal research more than other topics designated as nonlegal, like the 2021–2022 antitrust topic. While there were questions about the role of the court in relation to the executive authority topic, the timeliness of the topic was due in large part to nonlegal authors calling for congressional checks on President Trump. The areas of the executive authority topic that were most clearly legal in nature, such as deference issues, were among the less debated parts of the topic, raising question about the efficacy of the rotation in encouraging different types of research. Similarly, on the legalization topic, marijuana was the most common affirmative. For most negative teams, the best argument for why marijuana had not been legalized was due to political consequences. So, despite some affirmative marijuana cases that used judicial action, many of the debates about marijuana focused on the consequences of legislative and executive action, which typically favored nonlegal research.

The mandate to have a certain topic within the rotation and the arbitrary determination of what defines a legal, domestic, or foreign topic create a second problem. Due to the rotation, the CEDA Topic Committee has had to turn down quality papers for not fitting the topic designation for the given season, to the frustration of paper authors who have put in a great deal of work into the proposal. The vague nature of the topic categories further frustrates authors, as the determination of what counts as a sufficiently legal topic can come across as subjective. Unfortunately, rejection of topic papers from the ballot can deter future authors from bothering to write a topic paper in the first place. Rather than discourage participation, we should be encouraging more people to engage in the topic process. In the current topic creation process, few people outside the topic author(s) and the Topic Committee members contribute much work in the creation of a topic. Reforming the topic rotation may be a way to encourage overall participation in the topic selection process.

A third issue with the current topic rotation is that it can cause topic authors to make contrived arguments that a topic fits within the requirements of the topic rotation. Many times, topics are generated and draw community support because of their timeliness, depth of literature, or general appeal to the policy debate community. However, depending on where we are in each topic cycle, a certain type of topic may be required for the season. This creates a "square peg with a round hole" problem, where authors struggle to rationalize that a topic fits within the mandated topic type. When this occurs, topics are forced to conform to themes, as mandated by the topic rotation, that do not reflect the topic's core of literature. For example, the space topic succeeded in getting the community excited to have a season of debates about space exploration and development. However, the topic rotation required an international topic for the season. As a result, the space topic proposal was framed as a debate about international cooperation over space. Given the short time frame for area paper development, the topic paper authors did not have enough time to fully explore the potential for negative arguments in some areas of the proposed topic. Thus, the Topic Committee had to take the space topic paper and engineer a balanced international space resolution for a year of debate in just three days. The result was a resolution based on mostly artificial controversies with few true affirmative solvency advocates and a lack of quality disadvantages.

The mandated topic rotation also may prevent timely and high-quality topic proposal submissions that happen to fall within a previously debated topic type. Current CEDA bylaws require within a four-year window that a domestic, international, and legal topic are selected at least once. Therefore, if the debate community selects a legal topic for a season, it may prevent or prolong submission of a timely and high-quality legal topic within that four-year window if a domestic or international topic must be offered in the remaining rotation cycle. Additionally, the arbitrary distinction between domestic, legal, and international topics undermines the value of the topic rotation. For example, the 2021–2022 topic had to be domestic (Ryan, 2021), and a proposal to debate about antitrust was selected. While this is a domestic topic, legal research is important to research antitrust issues. Antitrust is, by all accounts, "a controversy within legal jurisprudence," as a great deal of antitrust has been left to the courts to debate and decide, given that there is very little federal antitrust legislation. While the antitrust topic inevitably involves debates about the need for legislation or executive branch action, this does not nullify the central legal nature of the antirust topic. The next topic according to the rotation will have to be a legal topic, even though a legal topic that was labeled "domestic" was just selected. As a result, the purpose of the topic rotation, to ensure that students debate a variety of types of debate topics, is undermined by the process.

A WAY FORWARD

We propose keeping the current three topic types in place but shifting from a rotation to a criteria process as an amendment to Part IV, Section 8, of CEDA's (2021) bylaws. A topic, under our model, could satisfy multiple categories required in a four-year cycle. For example, the antitrust topic might fulfill both the domestic and legal criteria. Decisions to select a topic area could be placed primarily on the nature of the controversy and the community's excitement for it, rather than on a topic's fit within a rotation cycle. Ensuring students debate four topics with rich differences in literature and controversy types would still exist, but it would not generate the problems we have outlined.

The Topic Committee would help ensure that topics fit criteria. Currently, the Topic Committee sends out guidelines in April for what a topic paper is expected include, noting the area(s) needed, with a definition of the area(s). The committee then reviews papers for their fidelity to the given area for that year before adding them to the topic area ballot. Under our proposal, this power would remain with the Topic Committee. Crucially, however, its function would gradually shift, given the removal of a strict topic rotation. The Topic Committee would determine which criteria a given topic would satisfy. It would also let authors of papers know which of the criteria is required for papers of a given year, if it is one that is "locked in" by virtue of having not been in the previous three topics.

One concern with our proposal might be that the process can be gamed to get undesirable topics off the rotation. For example, the community could select a combined legal and domestic topic to get those areas "out of the way" and have three years of international topics. This is a legitimate concern. However, this problem exists in the current rotation, as voters select topics that fit their preferences and interests rather than value the topic rotation. Additionally, the current rotation produces topics that often feel stale and recycled, as they are made to awkwardly fit into an area type. This is frequently a problem when attempting to craft interesting topics when a "legal" topic area is required. For instance, in 2019, the NDT asked the community to rank the past decade of topics, and legal topics were some of the lowest ranked options (Onley, 2020, pp. 18–19). Legal topics, under our proposal, can, should, and will win. The difference is that they will arise when

Table 12.2. Proposed TAP and TWP Guidelines

<table>
<tr><th>Topic Area Paper (TAP) guidelines</th><th>Topic Wording Paper (TWP) guidelines</th></tr>
<tr><td>Length and limits:
Abstract: 250–500 words. Appendices optional.
TAPs: The material listed below should be covered in the first 25 pages. Beyond 25 pages, additional material is optional.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Topicality:
TAPs must meet whatever the topic rotation is according to the Topic Committee.</td><td>Topicality:
TWPs must fit within the parameters of the TAP.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Identify and describe a core controversy with the following:
1. Controversy areas should have negative positions that are not linked solely to fiat/process or lack of political will/money.
2. The controversy should be lengthy or enduring enough to last through the end of the next academic year.
3. Controversy areas should have distinct affirmative and disadvantage impact areas.
4. Both sides a controversy area should have more than 1–3 primary authors.
a. Papers should ideally list a few journals, databases, or special issues that demonstrate the existence of an extended scholarly controversy area.</td><td>TWPs should do the following:
1. Explain why a proposed topic matches the controversy of the selected papers.
2. Identify continuing, timely areas of controversy accessed by the preferred wording.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Identify:
1. At least 3–4 core affirmatives with solvency evidence
2. At least 2 topic disadvantages with uniqueness
3. At least 2 topic counterplans with a set of affirmative answers
4. At least 2 topic kritiks</td></tr>
<tr><td>Wordings:
1. Suggest at least 5 distinct resolutions (e.g., broad, list, floor/ceiling, and substantive differences)
2. Phrases to avoid and why</td><td>Wordings:
1. Wording papers should identify a preferred candidate.
2. Appendices should have self-contained alternative resolutions with definitions for each unique word.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Definitions:
1. All words should have at least dictionary definitions.
2. Papers should list and describe key terms of art and phrases for possible selection in stage 2.</td><td>Definitions:
1. All topic/area-specific words must have several dictionary and contextual definitions.
2. At least some cards need to have phrases like “X is defined as” or “we define X as.”</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Evidence standards:
1. High quality and recent
2. Bibliography should include peer-reviewed sources
a. Quality standards
b. Enforces “lengthiness” because of publication lags</td></tr>
</table>

the community is excited about them as a timely controversy, rather than bemoan being stuck with them due to the mandates of the topic rotation.

CONCLUSION

Over the course of four years, a student should have four interesting topics from distinct literature bases. Our working group examined the problems with the current process and generated a reform proposal that offers the best way to maximize the value of debating different types of topics and excitement about topics. We do not consider the current topic process irredeemable, nor do we think that our proposal is perfect. Rather, our proposal is a modest compromise for shifting the topic process away from a strict rotation in favor of criteria that a topic can satisfy.

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About the American Forensic Association

The American Forensic Association provides services for educators teaching the skills and values of citizenship and critical thinking through interscholastic and intercollegiate debate competition.

- Our principle is the power of individuals to participate with others in shaping their world through the human capacity of language.
- Our commitment to argument expresses our faith in reason-giving as a key to that power.
- Our commitment to advocacy expresses our faith in oral expression as a means to empower people in situations of their lives.
- Our research studies the place of argument in advocacy in these situations of empowerment.
- Our teaching seeks to expand students' appreciation of the place of argument and advocacy in shaping their worlds and to prepare students through classrooms, forums, and competition for participation in their world through the power of expression.
- Our public involvement seeks to empower through argument and advocacy.

The AFA charters the governing committees of the National Debate Tournament and the National Speech Tournament, two of the nation's premier competitive collegiate debate and speech tournaments. It also manages the academic journal *Argumentation and Advocacy* (published by Taylor and Francis) and cohosts (with the National Communication Association) the biennial Summer Conference on Argumentation.

Learn more about the AFA at https://www.americanforensicsassoc.org/.

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