Editor's Note

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The essays in this issue are bound together by their mutual concern with the issue of “perception.” Regardless of what any given thing may or may not “be,” there arises the question of how people regard or perceive that entity. The essays in this issue join in exploring particular entities important to the forensics world which are regarded in dissimilar ways by different audiences. Individually and as a group, these essays offer us the opportunity to both better understand our community and more clearly communicate with others about it.

First, we can ask how those of us inside the forensics community perceive our own practices. One particular topic which has drawn a significant amount of attention in recent years concerns the dividing line which separates Prose Interpretation from Dramatic Interpretation. Traditional genre distinctions based on site of publication or performance (i.e., books and short stories vs. stage plays) have become increasingly hard to explain or apply as technology, publication venues, and performance options have advanced. As a result, many feel that it is hard to adequately distinguish between the two forensics performance categories. More than one of our national organizations began to intensively explore this question a few years ago, and in spite of the many discussions and rule changes that have occurred since then, the borderline which separates these events remains fuzzy to many. Rudnick, Peavy, Crosby, Harter, and Dougherty offer an empirical study of our confused perceptions and suggest that more talking and thinking remains to be done by the forensics community in relation to this issue.

The second essay in this issue addresses a challenge that lies at the intersection of self-perception and other-perception. Since a large percentage of forensics coaches hold positions which also require them to demonstrate a regular pattern of continuing professional development (e.g. publication, convention presentation, membership in professional organizations, etc.), it is often important that these coaches be able to explain to their colleagues and administrators how their work constitutes a peer-recognized form of research. Too often, our administrators and/or department members do not see what we do as “real scholarship.” In fact, we may not see it as “scholarship” ourselves. White discusses the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) movement and explains how this approach can be used to articulate our work as a well-grounded form of scholarly performance. By taking advantage of this perspective, we can redefine our own self-perceptions and transform how others frame us.

The intersection between self-perception and other-perceptions of us is likewise explored by Stephens. And again, the goal of the essay is to both help us better understand our own work and better explain and justify our work to outside audiences. But instead of defending our personal work, Stephens’ focus is on what we can do to better defend our programs against outside forces which threaten their survival. Today, as many colleges and universities are re-thinking their curricular priorities, the topic of HIPs (High Impact Practices) is often raised. Frequently invoked in academic assessment discussions, HIPs programs are widely recognized as valuable contributors to institutional missions. Yet, endangered forensics programs have not widely adopted the concept of HIPs as a protective shield. Stephens provides a detailed analysis of the generic forensics program and systematically explains how and why this activity can and should be perceived as a HIP. Thus, his essay provides programs with useful ideas which can be utilized to defend
forensics programs from those who question their value in the current academic environment.

Taken together, these essays demonstrate the importance of thinking about who we are as forensicators (self-perception) and the crucial need—and wonderful opportunity—we have to shape the views (other-perceptions) others hold of our activity.

Also, in relation specifically to the operation of this journal, we take this opportunity to express our most sincere thanks and great appreciation to Elora (“Ellie”) Venchus, formerly a student (and champion debater) at North Central College. For the past two years she has done amazing work as the editorial assistant for this journal, and her carefully researched and fastidiously detailed work has been crucial to the development of this issue.

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