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The Bloomington Recommendations: Improving Forensic Leadership by Continuing the Conversation on Evaluating the Forensics Professional

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The Bloomington Recommendations Improving Forensic Leadership by Continuing the Conversation on Evaluating the Forensics Professional

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Preface: Forensics as an Activity—Why the Call for Evaluation and Assessment?

Forensics is by its very nature both co-curricular and competitive (Cardot, 1991). Normally, this insight would appear trivial; however, it does make for dilemmas when it comes to how we evaluate the work of our colleagues. The question of how we evaluate our colleagues is not unique to individual events (and for purposes of this paper, I am considering Lincoln-Douglas debate to be an individual event). Indeed, our colleagues in the policy community have faced a similar dilemma. One struggle that debate directors/coaches consistently confront is how to articulate teaching effectiveness outside of competitive success.¹ One director/coach resents the connection between teaching effectiveness and competitive success because despite how effectively a debate director/coach teaches his/her students, “Student talent is still an extremely important intervening variable” (Rowland and Atchinson, 2009, p. 6).

The debate community recognizes some of the unique challenges of assessing coach effectiveness. Rowland and Atchinson (2009) in the policy debate regarding promotion and tenure guidelines observed the following:

The responses demonstrate that traditional measures of teaching effectiveness such as student evaluations are rare for a director’s/coach’s debate related activities. We suspect that few of these traditional student evaluation measures would be appropriate for determining the teaching effectiveness of a debate director/coach. As a result, rather than focusing on measures for effectiveness, institutions are increasingly developing descriptions of the connections between debate coaching activities and the educational benefits associated with participation in intercollegiate debate. (Rowland and Atchinson, 2009, p. 6)

I start the Bloomington recommendations quite specifically with the phrase “how we evaluate the work of our colleagues” because it has a double meaning. When we fill out ballots at a tournament, we indirectly evaluate the efforts of our colleagues to prepare students for their competitive rounds. That kind of assessment can – but usually doesn’t lead to – a second kind of assessment – the assessment of our colleagues both within the forensics community and within their respective institutions.

As of now, within the forensics community, much of what we have done in assessment has been fairly informal and tends to be more on a discussion-based level. Just as within the athletic community they say, “Oh, so and so is a good football/volleyball/etc. coach,” we often say the same thing

with regard to other programs. What has passed for assessment is what Ehninger described nearly 60 years ago: “Apparently a few teachers of speech still believe that the success of a school’s forensics program may be measured merely by counting the cups in its trophy case. Fortunately, however, the majority are now more interested in the contribution which that program makes toward the intellectual, social, and moral development of the students who participate in it” (Ehninger, 1952, p. 237).

The question we must ask ourselves is simple: *How do we know that a program or what a forensics professional does is effective?* So why should the forensics community care about evaluation and assessment? Increasingly, regional accrediting agencies, states, and the federal government are placing stronger emphasis on assessment in the curriculum. Further, as Lederman (2010) observes, the next wave of assessment is to move from institutionally driven models toward faculty-driven models. As a part of that next wave, higher education is moving toward models within what has been called the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL). It is important for us as an educational activity to have assessment be a greater part of what we do. To put it in simply, it is up to the forensics community to create models of assessment before those models are created for us (Erwin and Wise, 2002).

Introduction

The continuum between competition and education that Ehninger described nearly 60 years ago is still part of forensics culture today. It could be argued that most people attending this conference side toward the educational aspect of forensics. However, Ehninger’s opening statement raises another more serious question: How do we know that forensics contributes toward the intellectual, social and moral development of students? Indeed, such a question is vital to SOTL, for as Kreber (2006) notes, SOTL involves “(1) careful consideration of educational goals and purposes suitable for addressing the various political, social, cultural, environmental and economic challenges of our times, (2) understanding how students learn and develop toward these and other academic goals, and (3) identifying ways to best facilitate this learning and developmental process” (p. 90). Many in the forensics community would identify with Kreber’s first two criteria of SOTL as part of the reason we encourage students to participate in forensics. The question becomes, how do we know that students have made progress in these areas?

The forensics community has taken tentative steps in the direction of assessment. The National Forensic Association has already started to make a move toward assessment with

its guidelines for individual events (Kelly, Paine, Richardson & White, 2010). Kelly, Paine, Richardson and White, serving as the NFA Pedagogy Committee, suggest a three-tier approach that is primarily designed to offer both an *apologia* for forensics within the communication discipline and to examine the rationale behind the genres of individual events. The committee did not, however, focus on the assessment of specific events (instead, their focus was on *genres* of events), nor the assessment of individual programs or forensics professionals.

What follows in this paper is not completely new. It serves as an extension of both Michael Bartanen's (2006) and Shawn Batt's (2003) arguments for assessment, and as a way of codifying what forensics professionals do. Given the increased calls for accountability within higher education, a document that helps guide the forensics professional in terms of her or his responsibilities both to her or his team and to the activity becomes more important than ever. This particular set of recommendations is not designed to assess specific events. Rather, it is designed to begin the conversation in six different areas:

1. Assessment by peers, colleagues, and self-assessment of instruction for forensics professionals.
2. Assessment by students of forensics professionals.
3. Begin the process of identifying how we assess the tournament process.
4. Begin the process of identifying how we assess forensics professionals' roles within organizations.
5. Begin the process of identifying how we assess the leadership abilities of forensics professionals.
6. Begin the process of how we may evaluate forensics programs.

This paper seeks to both provide structure and formalization to the process of assessment, as well as to answer the question, "Is it possible to run a 'successful' program that's not based in competitive success?" These recommendations serve both as a companion document and as an expansion of the recommendations previously made with regard to promotion and tenure (Dreher, 2010). The Peoria Recommendations dealt with questions to be asked of all forensic educators, documentation of teaching, research, and service, and questions to be asked by internal and external reviewers, and are summarized in appendix 1. This paper will provide further detail about the kinds of questions forensics professionals should use to evaluate their own performance, as well as to provide further guidance for internal and external reviewers. The role that forensics team members play in evaluation will also be discussed. The remainder of this paper will consider each of the five purposes (hereafter identified as standards) in light of appropriate literature from the forensics community, higher education assessment, and leadership.

Standard 1: Peer, Colleague and Self-Assessment of Forensics Professionals' Instruction

I list this standard first because it is the most important – yet arguably, the most difficult – to define. Forensics professionals have a great many responsibilities, including both administrative and coaching (Danielson and Hollwitz, 1997; Workman, 1997; Williams and Gantt, 2005; Rowland and Atchinson, 2009; Dreher, 2010).

The challenge in understanding the effectiveness of instruction is that it often takes students several years to recognize the benefits of their forensics experience. Thus, any effective assessment program – particularly for the long-term forensics professional – must include both short-term and long-term assessment (Bartanen, 2006). In certain cases, this document will recommend various assessment tools; in other cases, the tools have not been developed, or have been started and should be researched and/or developed by the forensics professional. The idea behind the Bloomington recommendations is that assessment should not be considered an *addition*, but, rather, should be an outgrowth of what we already do as forensics educators (Ewell, 2002).

In order to assess instructional effectiveness, we must look at five particular types of assessment, several of which were mentioned previously (Bartanen, 2006), but will be greatly expanded in this document: self-examination, chair and colleague review, peer review, chair and colleague review, and student and alumni assessment.

Standard 1a. Self-Examination

Seldin (1999) recognizes that self-examination and reflection is a part of – but not the end-all – for evaluation of teaching. As he observes: "Self-evaluation thus has the potential for a positive effect on teaching as the instructor develops self-recognition and is thereby enabled to respond more effectively to students and others. Despite this obvious benefit, however, self-evaluation by itself holds limited promise to teaching improvement. Some teachers simply do not know how to evaluate their performance" (pp. 100-101). Forensics professionals tend to be more critical and self-aware by the nature of the activity in which we engage; we are used to continual feedback loops and criticism. However, it is easy for the efficacy of the self-examination to be lost, particularly when symptoms of burnout appear (Piety, 2010).

Seldin (1999) suggests a variety of questions that can be asked as part of a self-examination. These questions (pp. 104-106) are adapted to a forensics context.

- What is my greatest asset as a forensics professional? My greatest shortcoming?
- Within forensics, which area do I regard as my strongest? My weakest?
- What is my primary goal with respect to students?
- How would I describe the atmosphere on my team? Am I satisfied with it?
- How do I encourage students to seek help when necessary?

- What is the one thing I most want students to learn? Why is that so important?
- What is the one thing I would most like to change about my approach to forensics coaching? What have I done about changing it?
- What would I most like my student to remember about me as a teacher/coach 10 years from now? Why?

In order for the self-examination to be successful, Seldin (1999) argues that it must be consistent with information obtained from other assessment sources and should help to explain contradictory information that may be found elsewhere.

Self-assessment can also fall under the scholarship of teaching and learning. For that to be the case, self-assessment must be ongoing, documented continually, and demonstrated to be part of a research program. Truman State (2006) offers a worksheet in SOTL that offers the following areas to consider:

1. What topics of inquiry interest you? Teaching strategy, curriculum revision, assessment method, recurring student misconception, recurring disappointment, other.
2. Try framing your interest as a question amenable to research.
3. What evidence could be collected to answer this question?
4. What do you have in place already that would assist your inquiry into this topic?
5. What methods would be used to interpret that data?
6. What outside help would you need to pursue this?
7. Who else might be interested in your findings?
8. Could your question stand re-framing?

McConnell and Sasse (2005) provide additional guidelines in terms of framing questions involving SOTL by asking, "Is this question of importance beyond your course? How would you share your results?" (n.p.).

Based on the answers to these questions, a forensics professional might be able to utilize her or his ongoing investment in forensics and her or his team to profitably conduct research in the area of forensics and forensics pedagogy. Areas within the communication discipline such as small group communication, interpersonal communication, organizational dynamics, and leadership studies could be applied to forensics teams. Such research already takes place on an informal level as we review what happened in a given year; what becomes important is how we make changes in how our teams function as a result of those reviews (Piety, 2010). Additionally, this may be a way not only for forensic professionals to engage in significant SOTL research, but to answer the questions of how forensics research fits within the forensic discipline (Logue & Shea, 1990; Kerber & Cronn-Mills, 2005; Croucher, 2006).

Standard 1b. Chair and Colleague Review

This type of assessment is focused internally within one's department and institution, as opposed to externally (the latter will be covered in the next section). One of the starting points to consider when it comes to chairs and colleagues within the department would be to consider how the forensics professional has negotiated and defined her or his role with respect to the sponsoring department and the institution as a whole. Some professionals, for example, may have been given limited committee work or advising loads, while others may have traditional standards for tenure and promotion in addition to their forensics duties.

The recommendation here would be that each forensics professional have a uniquely defined set of goals and expectations that cover the roles played by the forensic professional, as well as what is considered adequate and exemplary performance within those roles. As a starting point, the forensics professional can look to lists already generated of a professional's duties, such as Williams and Gantt's (2005) article describing the typical duties of a director of forensics, Danielson and Hollwitz's (1997) approach to evaluation, and the tenure and promotion guidelines for both debate and individual events (Rowland & Atchinson, 2009; Dreher, 2010). Additionally, for those on a tenure track, how forensics counts toward teaching, research, and/or service should be clarified and agreed to (preferably before hiring) by both the professional and the appropriate academic officials. For some professionals, for whom creative performance counts as scholarship, this may be particularly important in helping chairs and colleagues see that they are meeting appropriate scholarship requirements.

The point made here in these recommendations is that often the forensics professional does not look like her or his colleagues when it comes to rehiring, tenure and promotion guidelines – because of the nature of what we do, we *are* different than other faculty members. Accounting for that difference is crucial in terms of review.

Standard 1c. Peer Review

Peer review is often discussed as both a formative and summative process (Perlman and McCann, 1998). Formative review "should include nonjudgmental descriptions of faculty members' teaching by colleagues, administrators, and, where available, teaching consultants as well as students" (Keig and Waggoner, 1994, n.p.). Formative review is typically a feedback process designed to give advice and feedback about one's teaching in a non-judgmental setting. Summative processes, on the other hand, are designed around formal decisions when the chair, other colleagues, and students provide feedback after the course was over.

Obviously, the forensic professional typically cannot have peer review done in the same kind of way as it would be done for a course. If there are nearby forensic professionals, however, they might be consulted for a more traditional course-based peer review. In terms of peer review of programs and of the professional, one proposed solution would

be to have two different peer coaches from other institutions conduct a program/professional review. Some of the kinds of questions to be included could be (adapted from University of Minnesota Center for Teaching and Learning, n.d.):

- What is the main goal of your team?
- What specific objectives do you try to accomplish with your team? In other words, what do you expect students to be able to know and do as a result of being on the team?
- What strategies/methods will you use to help the learners to reach this objective?
- How will you assess whether the learners reached this objective? In other words, how will they show that they know and can do what you expected of them?
- Do you have any concerns that you would like the observer to address?

Peer review can involve the use of interviews and teaching portfolios, as well as observations of the forensics professional's team. External reviewers also could profitably discuss the effectiveness of the forensics professional in terms of feedback given to the community through her or his ballots (Morris, 2005).

Much of what happens now in terms of formative peer review takes place informally through mentoring and conversations in a variety of settings. The point of these recommendations is not to discourage such informal mentoring, but, rather, to encourage forensics professionals to document that mentoring through the use of formative peer review. Having another colleague be able to provide feedback in terms of one's team, particularly in its educational purposes, could potentially significantly benefit the forensics professional's development.

Standard 2. Role of Students in Assessment and Evaluation

The role that students play in the evaluation process is twofold: Students have the ability – and some would argue responsibility – to assess the role of the forensics professional, and students have the responsibility to assess their own learning. From a pragmatic perspective, one can argue that forensics students are indeed among the best students to evaluate a forensics professional, for they are the students who are most familiar with the work of the forensics professional, spending many hours both inside and outside classrooms. What follows in this portion of the guidelines is the concept that both assessment of the forensics professional and students' self-assessments are symbiotic in nature; a student's self-assessment can be utilized by the forensics professional, and the forensics professional arguably can be one of the biggest helpers for a student's self-assessment. This is the model established by a variety of colleges and universities beyond the education major (which often uses a portfolio model²), including Truman State University, where nearly one-quarter of all students used co-curricular activities in their required portfolios (Kuh, Gonyea, & Rodriguez, 2002, p. 119). In addition, forensics teams are a

particularly good place for formative assessment; since the team is a dynamic system, the forensics professional engages in and receives continual feedback. The team's performance at tournaments can be considered at least in part illustrative of the success of the feedback loop that exists between students and the forensics professional.

What should students assess?

The issue of having students help in the assessment process has become codified by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCACS). As Lakeland College's guide to assessment pointed out, one of the newer guidelines from NCACS was that, "Results obtained through assessment of student learning are available to appropriate constituencies, including students themselves" (p. 1).

There are several places in which students can help with the assessment of forensics professionals and forensics programs: overall leadership and vision of the team, coaching/teaching, critical thinking, as well as affective learning.

When examining the role that students have to play in the assessment process, one of the factors we must consider is to what extent the vision of the team coincides between students and the coaching staff (Piety, 2010; Lauth, 2008). Students are able to assess this particular dimension of the leadership abilities of the forensics professional because they are, in a sense, living with this dimension of the forensics professional on a daily and weekly basis. Indeed, our colleagues in athletics engage in leadership assessment within their athletic programs (Skoglund, 2008; Farneti, 2008; Tsutsumi, 2000; Cumming, Smith & Smoll, 2006).

Standard 2a. Student Assessment of Coaching/teaching

As noted earlier, the applicability of traditional teaching measures to the realm of forensics is somewhat suspect. Since the courses we teach (for those institutions offering academic credit for forensics) are not like traditional courses, institutions often have to use alternative assessment tools. For some, treating forensics as a laboratory course is the closest approximation. For others, individualized assessments will have to be created. While there may be a loss of validity and reliability in the created assessment, that loss is balanced by the lack of validity of traditional instruments for the kinds of learning done on a forensics team.

The recommendation here is that students can help evaluate coaching and teaching through both formative and summative evaluations throughout the season. One means by which some programs engage in these evaluations is through end-of-the-year meetings with students. Notes about those meetings – from both the student and the forensic professional – can be part of assessment.

Standard 2b. Student Assessment of Critical Thinking

Forensics in general and debate in particular has had a research tradition that has looked at the effects of participation on critical thinking (Allen, Berkowitz & Loudon, 1995;

Greenstreet, 1993; Colbert, 1995). At this conference, three of the six panels deal with the role of critical thinking in individual events.³ Students in particular should be asked about how their critical thinking skills have developed as a result of their forensic participation. Paul and Nosich (1993) have provided both a series of objectives and criteria by which we can assess higher order thinking. Paul and Nosich's paper offered 21 criteria; an example of how we might assess the role of forensics from a critical thinking perspective can be found in criterion #11:

Narrow concepts of critical thinking sometimes characterize it in negative terms, as a set of tools for detecting mistakes in thinking. A rich, substantive concept of critical thinking, however, highlights its central role in all rationally defensible thinking, whether that thinking is focused on assessing thought or products already produced, or actively engaged in the construction of new knowledge or understandings. Well-reasoned thinking, whatever its end, is a form of creation and construction. It devises and articulates purposes and goals, translates them into problems or questions, seeks data that bear upon problems or questions, interprets those data on the basis of concepts and assumptions, and reasons to conclusions within some point of view. All of these are necessary acts of the reasoning mind and must be done "critically" to be done well. Hence all require critical thinking. (n.p.)

Standard 2c. Student Assessment of Affective Learning

This is the area of forensics that we tend to ignore, but it is an area in which communication instructors have some knowledge and familiarity. McCroskey (2007) observes: "When discussing affective learning, we are most likely to be concerned with student affect toward the subject matter of the course. If students do not like the subject matter, there is much less probability they will learn the subject being taught" (p. 512). In the realm of forensics, we certainly have the ability to assess affective learning. While it's often true that the debater won't cross over and do interpretation, what we should be able to do is to convince the debater of *the inherent worth* of interpretation, and vice versa.

Additionally, there are several surveys available to the forensics community that deal with some of the affective reasons students become part of a team, and how they feel about forensics. McMillan and Todd-Mancilla's (1991) survey does start to address the issues of affective learning in the forensics community. Williams, McGee and Worth (2001) created a survey that looked at the perceived advantages and disadvantages to forensic competition; Quenette, Larson-Casselton and Littlefield (2007) followed up by using the Williams, McGee and Worth questionnaire for their study. The recommendation is that these surveys be further tested to determine their reliability and validity for measuring affective learning.

Finally, there is the notion that forensics can contribute to student learning outside of the immediate forensics context. "Informal discussions with faculty members about intellec-

tual issues are associated with increases in students' aspirations to achieve at a higher level than would be predicted by pre-enrollment characteristics. Initial interactions with faculty members are also very influential in increasing the value placed on high academic achievement and in compensating for the general student culture that does not typically value such achievement" (Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010, p. 334). Further tools can be created to investigate students' desire to succeed, and measurements of post-baccalaureate education can also be utilized to assess Komarraju, Musulkin and Bhattacharya's assertion.

Standard 2d. Alumni Assessment of Forensics Professionals

Bartanen (2006) notes the importance of alumni in terms of guiding program choices. He offers one example: "if program alumni report that they made particular use of research skills learned in forensics, the forensic educator may need to determine whether the program's current emphasis on extemporaneous debate or individual events is adequately building those research skills" (p. 41). Alumni information gathered either by direct surveys, or questions asked in the process of tenure and promotion can provide the forensics professional with valuable information.⁴ Some universities already ask questions helpful to the forensics professional, such as in the area of critical thinking.⁵ The key is to find ways to make sure that the questions are not just focused on the entire collegiate experience, but more specifically in the student's forensic experience.

Standard 3: Assessment of the Tournament Process

Obviously, administering course evaluations does not work effectively within a tournament setting, but we really must ask the question more concretely: What makes for a successful tournament experience? How do we know that the host has run an effective tournament? Curiously, the forensic literature is mostly silent to this issue – interestingly, the one relevant line from the 1st Developmental Conference (Schnoor and Karns, 1988) comes in the recommendations section as a result of the Hatfield, Hatfield and Carver paper about wellness: Tournament hosts should be encouraged "to analyze and meet the needs of the forensic community even if it places more demands on the host" (p. 32). However, nowhere within the Hatfield, Hatfield and Carver (1988) paper does it specify *how* this analysis is to take place; rather, the paper is (rightly) concerned with issues of wellness in the forensics community.

Clearly, no standardized tools have yet been developed in order to assess the tournament experience, but several key components can be suggested:

1. How effective was the tournament host (or director, if the host also didn't direct) in terms of managing entries? Were initial entries and changes to entries handled correctly?
2. Did the host adequately explain where key facilities were on campus?

3. Did the host provide opportunities for wellness – adequate food/drink options, time in the schedule for eating, reflection, etc.? (Olson, 2004)
4. Were limited preparation topics and parliamentary debate topics both challenging and appropriate for the level of the student? (Hefling, 1997)
5. Was tabulation done efficiently and correctly?

Tournament hosts, as well as other forensics professionals, should feel free to add to this list and to create standards by which tournament effectiveness can be discussed.

Standard 4: Evaluation of Professionals in Organizations

This proposed standard goes beyond what we typically do in terms of assessing lines on a curriculum vitae. Historically, when someone has said that she or he is a member of an organization, or in a leadership position, the default has been to accept what that person says at face value. Within the forensics community, however, accepting the default paradigm has led to two different types of problems: the same individuals who are really doing the lion's share of the work in several organizations, as well as serving as inadequate documentation for those who are doing the work. Both of these problems will be discussed, and proposed solutions identified.

Clearly, people such as Larry Schnoor, Joel Hefling, Dan Cronn-Mills, and others have been recognized as exemplars in terms of the work they've done for the forensics community. However, many organizations have a variety of committees, but the work of those committees goes undone or unnoticed. There is a fine line that must be balanced here. How should we recognize those who are engaging in effective leadership while recognizing that sometimes, the most effective leadership does not necessarily get mentioned or isn't obvious? Chairing an impromptu topics committee, for example, will not necessarily get a great deal of publicity, but is absolutely essential to the functioning of a national tournament.

Organizations should engage in a greater effort to find members that are not currently serving and train them in both the necessary tasks as well as the importance of those tasks to the organization. Additionally, some committees never end up producing the work needed to engage the organization. A simple review of meeting minutes will indicate that a given committee has been tasked to accomplish a particular goal, with no mechanism for follow-up. Such issues often arise because of the busyness of the committee head or even the officer that appointed the committee. However, those issues lead to questions of how the committee head has engaged in leadership.

Proposed solutions:

1. Encourage member organizations to require committees to publish semi-annual or annual reports of their work. Include a discussion of all committee members, as well as what those committee members have done toward the

committee's work. If there are *ad hoc* committees, those should be included. Links to all of the committee reports should be made available on the organization's website.

2. Organizational leadership should use the appointment powers they have to remove people from committees who are not functioning well.
3. When it comes time for promotion/tenure/rehiring, chairs or committees should verify and contact organizational leadership to verify committee work.
4. Particularly active members of committees should solicit from their chair and/or the organizational leadership descriptions of the work done for rehiring/tenure/promotion files.

I recognize that the third solution is a bit idealistic. However, a knowing department chair *can* engage in that strategy; all it takes are several phone calls or emails. In any event, it is important for the forensics professional to be proactive in documenting her or his work on a committee. In fact, if that work is significant, it is likely that a member of the organization's leadership would be an external reference.

Standard 5: Evaluation of Leadership Abilities

At first, this standard seems to be inherent within the forensics position and unworthy of further discussion. Obviously a team cannot be successful without effective leadership. However, in order to have a complete picture of the forensics professional, we must understand her or his leadership style, and see the ways in which leadership is fostered both within the team and externally, since the development of leadership skills is often listed as one of the benefits of forensics (Zueschner, 1992).

The study of leadership and group cohesion within coaching situations is a well-documented part of the athletic literature (Skoglund, 2008; Farneti, 2008; Tsutsumi, 2000; Cumming, Smith & Smoll, 2006). Certainly, forensics has some significant differences from athletics. Athletics is often more selective in terms of who is part of a team's roster, while forensics, by its educational nature, must be a bit more open in terms of who is a part of a team. Accordingly, it may not always be possible for a forensics professional to have the power to influence change within a group. But, insofar as it is possible for the professional to do so, the professional should be aware of strategies to help with group dynamics on teams (Lauth, 2008; Croucher, Thornton & Eckstein, 2006; Hughes, Gring & Williams, 2006).

Wergin (2007) surveyed the leadership literature and found that servant leadership has become an important area of research within the field of leadership. Many forensic professionals remain in their positions because of a desire to serve students, whether it be in a mentoring role or for other reasons (White, 2005). Wergin's survey of servant leadership highlighted four elements that are particularly relevant for forensic professionals: altruistic calling, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational leadership. Each of these will be explained, and then implications will be drawn in terms of assessment.

Demonstration of Servant Leadership:

Altruistic calling is the “leader’s deep-rooted desire to make a positive difference in others’ lives” (Wergin, 2007, p. 13). In other words, the altruistic calling comes out of the idea of serving first, and asking, “Do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, and more autonomous?” (Beazley & Beggs, 2002, p. 57).

Wisdom is “a combination of awareness of surroundings and anticipation of consequences” (Wergin, 2007, p. 13). Wisdom is also labeled as foresight within the servant-leader literature. Young (2002) describes foresight as the central ethic of leadership. For Young, foresight includes the ideas of foreseeing the unforeseeable, using the art of discernment, moving with the lead of a leader (by demonstrating both leadership *and* service), and developing creative, measurable plans (p. 246).

Persuasive mapping is “influencing others using sound reasoning and mental frameworks” (Wergin, 2007, p. 13). McGee-Cooper and Trammell (2002) note that servant-leaders will be “sensitive to what motivates others and empower all to win with shared goals and vision” (p. 145). In addition, McGee-Cooper and Trammell note that persuasive mapping within a servant-leadership mindset involves the generous sharing of power, as opposed to the control of power, and that trust is an important part of persuasion. Sipe and Frick (2009) suggest that in servant-leadership, persuasion is often best accomplished in a narrative framework.

Organizational stewardship is “preparing an organization to leave a positive legacy” (Wergin, 2007, p. 13). Simply put, it is the idea that we leave an organization – or in this instance a forensics team – in better shape than when we first became a part of the team.

These same four elements can with modifications be applied to a forensic professional’s service to an organization. For those professionals who lead organizations, it is fair to raise the question of how they have helped the organization, particularly in areas such as organizational stewardship.

Application and Evaluation: Knowing How a Team is Effective

There is a developing literature base within the field of leadership studies that suggests several approaches by which we can examine a team. Hill (2010) offers a questionnaire that can be given to examine team excellence and collaborative team leadership; it can be found in Appendix 2 of this paper. Hill’s survey or a similar survey could be given to team members in order to investigate issues of both team cohesion and leadership on the part of the forensics professional. Sipe and Frick (2009) also establish 21 different traits for servant leaders, which can be found in Appendix 3. Both tools can serve as initial guides to help evaluate this component of leadership.

Standard 6: Evaluation of Forensic Programs

Forensics programs typically don’t exist within a vacuum; they exist to further serve the college or university. Additionally, since many programs are grounded in an academic department, assessment and evaluation must come in the context of that department’s mission and objectives.⁶ Certainly, if there are specific courses for which students get credit, then evaluation should come in the context of those course numbers. That said, however, evaluation of the forensics experience can become more complex, based on whether or not forensics is open simply to regular team members, or if forensics is part of departmental requirements to graduate.⁷

Models of Evaluation:

Bartanen (2006) referred to triangulation as a strategy for evaluation – utilizing peer institutions as a means of comparison for a given program. Bartanen rightly suggests that triangulation may only be partially successful because of fundamental differences between programs.⁸

One factor that forensics professionals must be aware of is that evaluation of programs occurs under a variety of different models. Conrad and Wilson (1985, p. 21) suggest that there are four paradigms by which academic programs are typically evaluated:

Model Type:	Organizing Framework:	Typical Questions:
Goal-based	Goals and objectives	To what extent is the program achieving its objectives?
Responsive	Concerns/issues of stakeholders	What are the activities and effects of the program? What does the program look like from a variety of perspectives?
Decision-making	Decision making	To what extent is the program effective?
Connoisseurship	Critical review	How do critics interpret and evaluate the programs?

Under these paradigms, the forensics professional should work with her or his supervisors and her or his colleagues to establish the appropriate model(s) to assess the team as it functions within the institution. Many decision-makers will function from either a responsive or decision-making paradigm; however, most professionals will function from goal-based or connoisseurship models. Reconciling these positions is critical. As Conrad and Wilson (1985) suggest, “The use of features from several different models enriches evaluations and is more likely to yield useful results” (p. 68).

Additionally, the use of external reviewers in the realm of forensics offers challenging guidelines. Will the people who are responsible for reviewing the program be the same people who judge the students of the program? If not, there is a danger that the external reviewers run into the kinds of problems that Miller (2005) noted in terms of understanding the nuances of particular regional forensic cultures. By the same token, we run the risk of being completely insular if we only accept regional reviewers; a balance of both regional and national reviewers is necessary. The call for reviewers has been made in our literature before (Bartanen, 2006); this call is to provide external feedback for the program as well as for the forensic professional, in addition to the internal feedback that is a normal part of assessment.

Integrating a model-based framework with normal assessment objectives:

For the forensics professional (who may or may not be working in conjunction with a staff), the important aspects to consider are the following:

1. What characterizes our program?
2. Why do we have forensics at our given institution? How does forensics serve the institution's needs? This is where Conrad and Wilson's perspective comes into play – how do the various audiences and constituencies of the institution view forensics? Additionally, the evidence found to support this question can help when it comes to maintaining a program during vulnerable times.⁹
3. What are the goals and objectives sought for the forensics team? These will likely be a combination of forensics professional goals as well as student goals, and should be prioritized by the forensics professional.
4. How will we measure the attainment of those objectives? Walvoord (2010) suggests that in addition to portfolios, forensics professionals could also gather sample student work along with establishing criteria for how we evaluate that student work. This evaluation would go beyond the realm of counting breaks at various national tournaments and instead could utilize approaches such as the assessment criteria from the NFA Pedagogy Committee (Kelly, Paine, Richardson, & White, 2010).

Bruff (n.d.) suggests an approach for assessing and making changes to educational practice based on the SOTL literature. Assessment must be:

1. Informed by the work of others
2. Include an explicit question or hypothesis about teaching-learning relationships
3. Shaped by an explicit design or plan for addressing the question at hand
4. Collecting credible data as evidence
5. Analyzing evidence and drawing conclusions
6. Reflecting and taking action
7. Cyclical and ongoing

8. Results are documented and disseminated
9. The practitioner is principally responsible for the inquiry plan and process

Answering the question: Can a program have success without “competitive success?”

If a forensics program is grounded in education, then clearly, it should be able to demonstrate that it is successful beyond the trophies earned in any given season. There are at least two different ways in which a forensics professional can both structure a program as well as justify a program: service learning, and bringing in new students to the activity.

The notion of service learning within the forensics community is not new; many programs such as Central Michigan University's program have been engaged in service learning for many years. There is also a fair amount of literature describing service learning both within forensics (Hatfield, 1998; Hinck & Hinck, 1998; Warriner, 1998) and within departments of communication (Oster-Aaland, Sellnow, Nelson & Pearson, 2004). Forensics professionals can document their work with a variety of non-traditional populations, such as what Central Michigan and Ball State University have done, bringing forensics to the community through presentations and performances, as well as groups such as Urban Debate Leagues (UDL's). In all cases, the students must be able to reflect on their experiences; Hinck & Hinck (1998) provide frameworks by which the students can process their service-learning experience, and Warriner (1998) provides an example of the reflection of that experience.

Additionally, forensics professionals can document the educational success of their program in terms of how well it brings in new students to the activity. Some programs, such as the University of Vermont in debate, are well known for incorporating novice students into forensics. Being able to document the ways in which new people without previous experience are drawn into the activity can serve as a testimony to the leadership and the success of the forensics professional in building a sustainable program.

Conclusions

The reality is that standards for assessment, promotion and tenure have been changing over time (Perlmutter, 2010). **Demonstrating** the effectiveness of what we do as forensic professionals will not be optional; rather, it will be an expected part of the academic lifestyle. Such efforts will not only help the forensics professional continue to remain a part of the community, but will also help the community in general. Any time we can provide answers to the question, “What do students uniquely gain by being a part of forensics?” we help the community, and we help the individual student as well. It also allows us to demonstrate academic leadership. Asking how forensics contributes to home departments as well as our respective institutions helps to demonstrate how the forensics professional is contributing to education. Indeed, forensics professionals are leaders in a variety of ways: forensics professionals are able to integrate

the insights gained from a variety of disciplines such as interpretation, argumentation and political science into practical applications. Forensics professionals have an ability unlike many professors to contribute to the development of students both academically and socially. We must take the next steps to document the leadership in which we already engage.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Original framework for tenure and promotion evaluation (Dreher, 2010):

1. Questions to be asked of all forensic educators
 - a. What is your coaching philosophy?
 - b. What is your judging philosophy?
 - c. What is your teaching philosophy? How do you demonstrate effective teaching?
 - d. How do you see your program within the context of various forensic organizations? Do you know what the various organizations stand for?
 - e. How do you see forensics as an educational opportunity?
 - f. How would you define your program? If someone were to ask you what makes your program unique, how would you answer?
 - g. How do you know your program is meeting its goals?
2. How does the professional document teaching?
3. How does the professional document service?
4. How does the professional document research?
5. Questions to be asked by internal and external reviewers
 - a. Does the forensic professional understand the key issues of the field?
 - b. Has the forensic professional shown mastery of key competencies?
 - c. When appropriate, has the forensic professional established her/himself as an effective teacher in her/his field of study?
 - d. Has the program clearly identified its mission, and has the forensics professional successfully operated within its mission?

Appendix 2: Team Excellence and Collaborative Team Leader Questionnaire From Hill (2010, p. 267):

1. There is a clearly defined need – a goal to be achieved or a purpose to be served – that justifies the existence of our team.
2. We have an established method for monitoring individual performance and providing feedback.
3. Team members possess the essential skills and abilities to accomplish the team's objectives.
4. Achieving our team goal is a higher priority than any individual objective.
5. We trust each other sufficiently to accurately share information, perceptions, and feedback.
6. Our team exerts pressure on itself to improve performance.
7. Our team is given the resources it needs to get the job done.

8. If it's necessary to adjust the team's goal, our team leader makes sure we understand why.
9. Our team leader creates a safe climate for team members to openly and supportively discuss any issue related to the team's success.
10. Our team leader looks for and acknowledges contributions by team members.
11. Our team member understands the technical issues we must face in achieving our goal.
12. Our team leader does not dilute our team's effort with too many priorities.
13. Our team leader is willing to confront and resolve issues associated with inadequate performance by team members.

Appendix 3: 21 traits of servant leadership (from Sipe & Frick, 2009, pp. 5-6):

- Maintains integrity
- Demonstrates humility
- Serves a higher purpose
- Displays a servant's heart
- Is mentor-minded
- Shows care and concern
- Demonstrates empathy
- Invites feedback
- Communicates persuasively
- Expresses appreciation
- Builds teams and communities
- Negotiates conflict
- Is visionary
- Displays creativity
- Takes courageous and decisive action
- Comfortable with complexity
- Demonstrates adaptability
- Considers the "greater good"
- Accepts and delegates responsibility
- Shares power and control
- Creates a culture of accountability

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Notes

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- ¹ That is not to say that the results of competition cannot be used as *an* assessment tool. This argument is more to say that results at competitions are not *the only* assessment tools we have to determine the educational effectiveness of forensics.
- ² See among many others Williams, S. C., Davis, M. L., Metcalf, D., & Covington, V. M. (2003, January 31). The evolution of a process portfolio as an assessment system in a teacher education program. *Current Issues in Education* [On-line], 6(1). Available: <http://cie.ed.asu.edu/volume6/number1/>; Britten, J.S. and Mullen, L.J. (2003). Interdisciplinary digital portfolio assessment : Creating tools for teacher education. *Journal of Information Technology Education* 2, 41-50. Available: <http://informingcience.org/jite/documents/Vol2/v2p041-050-82.pdf>.
- ³ Appropriate citations will be included here upon the conclusion of the conference.
- ⁴ The author's institution requires the selection of several alumni as outside reviewers when it comes time for promotion, tenure and re-tenure. Other institutions have utilized a similar system.
- ⁵ Illinois State is one such example. See http://assessment.illinoisstate.edu/activities_services/documents/2007ASurveyCodebk1.pdf
- ⁶ Historically, forensics programs have been housed in departments of communication. However, increasingly, we find forensics programs in places such as the Honors College, Political Science, or even within Student Development.
- ⁷ The author's institution requires Media Communication majors to attend at least two forensics tournaments before graduation. Several other institutions in Minnesota have similar requirements.
- ⁸ It is possible for people to see which institutions a school considers to be its peer institutions. Go to: <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/pas/expt/>, a website created by the National Center for Education Statistics. Make sure to select "Use institution-defined custom comparison group" to see who your institution considers its peers. The selection is normally made by either someone in the assessment office, or in academic affairs. Also note that the comparison is not necessarily two-way; for example, the author's university considers Gustavus Adolphus to be a peer institution; Gustavus does not consider the author's university as a peer.
- ⁹ As one example, the author's institution published several years back its president's strategic report. The forensics team served three of the items mentioned in the report.