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Antidosis for a Forensics Life: An Isocratic Defense of Modern Practices of Competitive Forensics

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The forensics community is under attack from inside and outside the coaching profession. It is important that we as coaches defend our practices and justify the value of the activity. Despite his prominence in his own time and his influence over the development of rhetoric, the work of Isocrates has not been utilized to craft a defense of forensics. Similar to the situation we face today, Isocrates also had to defend his practices as a teacher of rhetoric. Using his works *Antidosis* and *Against the Sophist*, I attempt to craft a defense for the practices of the modern forensics community.

Isocrates was one of the greatest teachers of rhetoric in ancient Athens and one of the fathers of modern forensics. He lived from 436-338 BC and during that time crafted some of the most powerful and enduring teachings on rhetoric. In 392 BC, Isocrates founded the first permanent institution of liberal arts education. Located near the Lyceum in Athens, his school lasted for more than fifty years, and his students were a who's who of the ancient world (Matsen, Rollinson, & Sousa, 1990). His school would go on to become the most successful school of rhetoric in Athens and one of the most influential in history. Roman historian Velleius Paterculus went "so far as to call him the sole figure of note in the whole history of rhetoric, for in his view, before Isocrates and after his pupils there is nothing of note as far as the art of public speech is concerned" (Mirhady & Too, 2000, p. 204). Isocrates has been dubbed the "foremost speech teacher" of the ancient world (Berquist, 1959).

Isocrates' work has been used by members of the communication discipline as a source of justification for its educational practices and thus provides a potentially rich resource to draw upon to defend the educational practices of the forensics community. Richardson and Richardson (2010) discuss how the teachings of Isocrates provide a model for a modern vision of forensics leadership. Additionally, Isocrates' work has been discussed in the wider communication literature as a model for teaching rhetoric and civic education (Benoit, 1984; Depew & Poulakos, 2004). However, his work has not been used to defend the educational practices of forensics. Yet Isocrates can be used as a basis to defend forensics for two reasons. First, as previously discussed, he was one of the world's greatest speech teachers and his practices for teaching speech are similar to those used by modern coaches. Second, Isocrates' work centered on his defense of himself as a teacher of rhetoric and public speaking. His two most famous works, *Antidosis* and *Against the Sophists*, centered on his desires to defend his teaching of rhetoric and to distinguish his work from the less reputable work of the Sophists. The goal of this paper, then, is to use the writings of Isocrates, in particular these two works, to defend modern competitive forensics against those who critique the activity.

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As an activity and practice, modern forensics faces numerous challenges. Modern forensics is accused of being anti-educational, or subjected to questions about the educational and ethical practices of the activity (Billings, 2002; Burnett, Brand, & Meister, 2003; Cronn-Mills & Schnoor, 2003; Gaer, 2002; Kelly & Richardson, 2008; Richardson & Richardson, 2010; Thomas & Hart, 1983). Historically, forensics programs have faced challenges to justify their budgetary expenditures (Kirch, 2005; Mills, Pettus, & Dickmeyer, 1993; Newell, 2009), a problem which has been exacerbated by the shrinking college and university budgets and a desire to cut back on extracurricular activities (Newell, 2009). Now more than ever it is important for forensics educators to be able to defend the core of the activity and its modern practices. Furthermore, it is necessary for forensic educators to couch their arguments not only in practical defenses of the activity, but also in philosophical and scholarly terms. When defending ourselves to members of the communication community, administrators, parents, and state legislators, we would be well served to draw upon modern and ancient scholarly literature when crafting our arguments. Utilizing classical rhetorical sources as a resource for rhetorical invention and extension provides the user with additional ethos and logos. To this end, the work of the great rhetorician Isocrates can be used to defend the practices of the modern forensics educator.

To understand Isocrates' arguments in *Antidosis*, one must understand the context in which it was written. In ancient Athens, wealthy citizens could be subject to liturgies, which were forms of taxation requiring them to use their money for the public good. The goal of this system was to ensure that the wealthy used their money not only to benefit themselves but also the community. If their civic pride was found to be lacking, then a liturgy could be brought against them. In 356, an Athenian by the name of Megaclides was charged to pay for the building of a trireme, Hellenistic-style battleship. Megaclides refused to pay the tax, instead arguing that the rhetorician Isocrates ought to be liable because he was a wealthier man. Ironically, Isocrates himself was not a great public speaker, and he lost the trial. However, the trial became the pretext for the writing of *Antidosis*, a fictional defense of the author's life and work. In *Antidosis*, the fictional prosecutor Lysimachus brings the elderly rhetorician to court on charges that "he corrupted the young of Athens through his teaching and has taught them how to argue unjustly" (Mirhady & Too, 2000, p. 202).

The charges brought against Isocrates in *Antidosis* are not altogether different than those brought against the modern director of a speech and debate team. Isocrates was accused of corrupting the youth by teaching them unethical practices in an effort to attract as many students as possible and gain the material rewards of wealth. Critics of competitive forensics have charged members of the community with corrupting modern students by teaching them unethical practices aimed at competitive, rather than educational, success, and with the goal of gaining the material rewards of trophies (Billings, 2002; Burnett, et al., 2003; Kelly & Richardson, 2008). The term "antidosis" can be literally translated to mean "an exchange." Instead, the term may be used in the same way Isocrates did, translating to mean "a defense." What follows is an antidosis for the modern forensics coach, a defense of lifetimes spent competing and coaching forensics.

Classical Rhetoric and Modern Forensics

In *Antidosis*, Isocrates uses a fictional pretense to bring to life a real conflict. He creates the fictional prosecutor Lysimachus as an embodiment for all the critiques hurled against his work. Borrowing upon this technique of rhetorical invention, picture Isocrates not as an ancient Athenian teacher of rhetoric, but as a modern forensics coach and professor of communication. Furthermore, think not of Lysimachus as a legal prosecutor, but rather as a modern administrator who seeks to cut Isocrates the forensic coach's budget and abolish his team. In crafting Lysimachus' charges against the modern Isocrates, I draw upon relevant forensics literature on this subject, formal discussions on the subject held at national and developmental conferences, and informal discussions and critiques of the activity that I have either heard in person or read on the Individual Events Listserv (IE-L). I believe that Lysimachus would proffer four significant critiques against competitive forensics: 1) Forensics is focused on competitive goals and not educational goals; 2) Forensics teaches rhetorical convention rather than invention (this would include practices like the conventional speech structures, such as problem-cause-solution); 3) Forensics fails to teach students "real world" skills and abilities (for example, forcing students to memorize speeches is often critiqued as not being "real world"); 4) Forensics corrupts today's youth by teaching student values and traditions not in line with ethical reasoning and thinking.

1) Forensics is Competitive and Not Educational

One of the most often heard criticisms of forensics, and one that a modern Lysimachus would no doubt make, is that the emphasis it places on competition takes away from its educational values (Burnett, et al., 2003; Gaer, 2002; Kelly & Richardson, 2008; Richardson & Richardson, 2010). While neither Isocrates nor his students participated in competitive forensics, in *Antidosis* Isocrates is made to answer for his wealth and, specifically, for the practice of charging students for his teachings. These situations are similar, and Isocrates' defense of the material rewards he received in the form of money can be used to defend the material rewards received by students and coaches in the form of trophies.

Isocrates was not afraid to receive rewards for his teaching. While individuals like Plato saw this as unethical, Isocrates did not. He argued that if no one was willing to pay for his services, then what would it say about his abilities? He did not shrink from the claim that he received payment for his services. He stated, "I think everyone must know that the sophist's fee is the finest and greatest when some of his pupils become intelligent gentlemen (*kaliō kagathoi*) and are honored by the citizens" (p. 245-6). Isocrates' view on this subject is a very modern view of education and business. This is a defensible position. Isocrates provided a service, a very valuable one at that; it seems logical that he should get paid for doing so. Charging for services is much more defensible than the Sophists. As Isocrates noted in *Against the Sophists*, the other Sophists make false claims. He wrote:

They have no concern for the truth but think that their art (*techne*) consists of attracting as many students as possible... They themselves are so senseless--and they assume others are as well--that they write speeches

that are worse than private citizens might improvise, and they promise to make their students such good orators that they will miss none of the possibility of their case. (Mirhady & Too, 2000, p. 63).

Isocrates provides a valuable service and does not promise any quick fixes or unrealistic claims, and therefore contends it is not unreasonable to think he should receive compensation for his services.

A modern Isocrates would likely defend the practice of receiving trophies for competition as a reward for a service or performance worthy of accolade. Furthermore, one doubts that Isocrates would accept the assumption that competition and education are mutually exclusive. Based on his own experiences competing and teaching students to compete in the legal and political arenas of ancient Greece, it seems likely that he would agree with Hinck's (2003) view that competition has intrinsic educational benefits. However, not knowing his precise take on these arguments, we must look for clues in his writing. We do know that Isocrates argued the rewards he received for his teachings were justified because they were freely given to him as recognition from others, as are the trophies students receive at tournaments. Isocrates believed the payment he received was proof of the value of his teaching and also an incentive to become and stay a good teacher. In much the same way, trophies can act as an external form of motivation for students and coaches.

When modern Lysimachus charge that forensics is more concerned with competition than education, they are arguing that we as coaches are in truth Sophists. Burnett et al. (2003) made this argument when distinguishing between "coaches" and "teachers." Richardson and Richardson (2010) stated, "Forensics professionals are much more keenly aware of how to win, than we are of how, or even what, we should be teaching" (p. 123). They argue that much like the Sophists, we are aware of how to coach students to win, but we are not teaching in all the ways we should be. However, Isocrates would defend us as educators and not as practitioners of sophistry. First, forensics as an activity does not promise quick fixes or make unreasonable claims. The internet is filled with modern sophists promising to teach aspiring students to "win any argument." The internet bookstore Amazon.com lists six different books by different authors, all with some version of the title, *How to Win Any Argument*. One can only assume that the similarity of titles is demonstrative of the general lack of rhetorical invention these books contain. While these sophists promise to teach students "quick tricks," "sneaky tactics," and even in the case of one book, "how to use and abuse logic" in only a few pages or minutes, the leading forensics organizations make no such claims. Isocrates (2000) recognized the challenge of in teaching students to become good speakers. He wrote, "(To write) the entire speech properly with considerations (*enthymemata*) and to speak the words rhythmically and musically, these things require much study and are the work of a brave and imaginative soul" (p. 65). Instead of taking a few minutes, directors of forensics ask students to commit years of their life with only the promise of helping them improve. Isocrates also placed immense value in the importance of practice and required his students to practice their own and others speeches repeatedly. "In addition to having the requisite natural ability, the student must learn the form (*eide*) of speeches and practice their uses" (Mirhady & Too, 2000, p. 65). The belief in practice as an educational tool is also central to the pedagogy of modern forensics coaches. Modern coaches are thus clearly more in line with the teaching and thinking of Isocrates than his Sophistic counterparts.

Most importantly of all, students believe that their participation in the activity has benefited them. Isocrates (2000) wrote, “In fact I have many pupils, some of them spending three to four years with me. None these will be found to have faulted their experiences with me... they so valued the time spent with me that we parted with regret and tears” (p. 221). This experience is one common to many forensics coaches who after several years have students who so valued their experience that they had tears in their eyes. Isocrates’ belief that students valued their participation in the activity is backed up by the findings of McMillan and Todd-Mancilas’ (1991) whose survey of students involved in competitive forensics found that students believed their participation in the activity to have benefited the development of their self-esteem and education, and helped them to learn valuable skills. Additionally, McMillan and Todd-Mancilas found only 7.6 percent of students surveyed indicated that the value of competition and the desire to win awards was a major motivating factor in their participation in forensics (1991).

2) Forensics Teaches Rhetorical Convention Rather than Invention

One of the most frequent criticisms lobbed against forensics is that it teaches students conformity towards norms rather than rhetorical invention. As Paine (2005) noted, new students in forensics soon learn that the activity is governed by a plethora of unwritten rules. And while one may agree with Paine’s suggestions for encouraging students to challenge these norms, one might also agree with his point that these norms are not always harmful. A more strident critique of these practices comes from Billings (2002) when he wrote, “Successful programs can be defined by who knows the unwritten rules and who does not” (p. 33). Additionally, Kelly and Richardson (2008) argued that there exists a clear lack of educational objectives for the activity. They argue that because of this, we are left with an activity governed by fads, unwritten rules, and the subjective opinions of judges, the result of which becomes “what wins is good, and what is good wins” mentality. These are precisely the type of critique Lysimachus would make in hopes of justifying eliminating forensics at his university.

However, these critiques assume that in forensics, the norms of the activity are stagnant, and that those individuals who succeed in the activity do so not because they have learned the art of rhetoric but because they have learned conformity. Lysimachus would charge a modern Isocrates with not teaching students educational skills but rather teaching them conformity to a prescribed set of arbitrarily conceived conventions. For example, Lysimachus might point to the typical structure of persuasive speeches as problem-cause-solution. One could dispute the factual nature of this claim by pointing to notable examples of students who succeeded with different structures. Or, they might point to historical examples proving that this trend in speech structure is somewhat new and its popularity is proof of an evolving, rather than stagnating, speech culture. In fact, White and Messer (2003) found a number of differences that occurred over time with regards to structure and format of speeches at the Interstate Oratorical Association’s annual competition. But, let us assume for a moment that this critique is true, that the great oratory coach Isocrates had to respond to the criticism that he teaches students to structure their speeches in only this format.

When attempting to discover how Isocrates would respond to this charge, we are best served by looking at *Against the Sophists*. It is in this document that Isocrates attempts to distinguish his work and practices from those of the less reputable Sophists. Once again, it appears that forensics coaches are charged with being nothing more than modern Sophists: speech teachers who teach their students a few tricks and conventions but do little to expand their critical thinking and reasoning skills.

In *Against the Sophists*, Isocrates attempts to distinguish himself from his fellow Sophists in several ways. First, Isocrates is keen to point out that the other Sophists treat rhetoric as an ordered art that can be taught easily. In essence, the other Sophists offer a paint by numbers approach to speech making, something which Isocrates rejects. He wrote, “They do not attribute any of this power either to the student’s experiences or to his native ability, but they say that the science of speeches is like teaching the alphabet” (Mirhady & Too, 2000, p. 63, line 10). He continued by later pointing out, “They fail to notice that they are using an ordered art (*tetagmene techne*) as a model for creative activity (*poietikon pragma*)” (Mirhady & Too, 2000, p. 64, line 12).

Here we see Isocrates’ condemnation of the same sophistry that Lysimachus derides. How then would Isocrates prove he does not fall victim to these practices? Isocrates contrasts his understanding of this creative element with the other Sophists who appear unable to see it as a necessity. He summed this up when he wrote, “The greatest indication of the difference is that speeches cannot be good unless they reflect the circumstances (*kairos*), propriety (to *prepon*), and originality, but none of these requirements extends to letters” (Mirhady & Too, 2000, p. 64, line 12). According to Isocrates, the best speeches can only be produced with a combination of *kairos*, propriety, and creativity. Eloquence as understood by Isocrates can only be created through genuine invention.

Isocrates (2000) defended himself in *Antidosis* by asking his audience to look at the work of his students. Isocrates argued that the eloquence of his students was proof of their understanding of these attributes. There is no doubt that a modern Isocrates would point to speeches written and spoken by his students as evidence of their eloquence. We, too, should point to the work of our students as evidence of the power of rhetorical invention and mastery taught by our activity. In particular, we might point to the examples of exemplary speeches. Since forensics is a competitive activity, it might suggest that we would hold up examples of final round speeches and performances as evidence of the eloquence students are capable of producing. Isocrates reminds us that rhetoricians produce eloquence, but Sophists “write speeches that are worse than private citizens might improvise” (p. 63). Even the most strident critic of forensics would have to concede that the speeches in the final rounds of national tournaments exceed in skill and quality the speeches given by ordinary private citizens. Indeed, the speeches and performance given in preliminary rounds at an average tournament far exceed those of the average college student in terms of originality, strength of argument, complexity of ideas expressed, and delivery. Examining the product produced in public speaking classes versus those produced by competitive forensics provides clear proof that competition can and does create eloquence. Furthermore, this eloquence is recognized by those outside of the activity as is proven by the fact that numerous competitive forensics speeches appear as examples in public speaking textbooks alongside the most famous and important speeches in history (Cronn-Mills & Schnoor, 2003).

3) Forensics Fails to Teach Students “Real World” Skills and Abilities

Having failed to prove his case, Lysimachus would continue his attack on forensics by contending that the activity teaches students tricks and tactics rather than skills and abilities. Here Lysimachus might draw upon the works of one of Isocrates' contemporaries, Plato. When critiquing rhetoric in *Gorgias*, through the mouthpiece of Socrates, Plato argued that rhetoric is a false art akin to flattery and cookery (Nichols, 1998). According to Plato, the goal of these false arts was not to teach skills but rather to teach tricks aimed at obscuring truth. Since the rhetoric of Plato's time focused largely on the creation and performance of speeches, his critique applies to the world of forensics.

In recent years, a variety of questions have been raised concerning normative practices in forensics, or what appear to some to be arbitrary rules. For example, the perennial discussion that occurs on the IE-L concerning the use of black books in interpretation events. Individuals question everything from the color and size of the book, to the necessity of it in the first place. In recent debates on the IE-L concerning proposed rule changes being considered by National Forensics Association, one point of discussion focused on the normative requirement that students memorize their speeches for extemporaneous speaking performances. These are just two examples of the many conventions and rules that govern behavior in competitive forensics. The purpose of this article is not to critique or defend these practices, as this has already been done in other venues, but to point out that these practices, good or bad, do not inherently take away from the benefits this activity provides to its students.

Some of the conventions of our activity might seem odd to an ancient Isocrates, but the modern version of the man would have no problem defending them. Isocrates himself created a number of conventions and norms for public speaking that were embodied by his students. While Isocrates stressed the importance of content in speeches more than other ancient teachers, he still understood the importance of diction and style. He believed in the importance of a precise vocabulary and of the use of allusions and illustrations to and from history and philosophy. One of his greatest contributions to Greek oratory was that he freed it from the stiff style of prose that become commonplace and crafted a freer, slower, smoother method of writing and delivering speeches (Mirhady & Too, 2000). For evidence of Isocrates' own commitment to producing a polished end product, one needs to look no further than his work on *Panegyricus*, which he took 10 years to polish before publishing. Students who emerged from his school had a distinct and unique speaking style that would come to define oratorical style for years to come. Even more important than the specific conventions he bred into his students was his commitment to teach his students to think critically and speak eloquently: a commitment that is shared by current coaches and teachers in forensics. The point is that all forms of performance by nature develop conventions, and students taught by the same teacher will come to share certain traits. Yet these conventions are minor aspects of performances and do not negate the educational value of this activity.

While, forensics is governed by conventions and norms, it is still an activity that encourages students to think critically and deeply. Take, for example, the event of persuasive speaking, which asks students to persuade their audience to think or behave

differently. These speeches necessarily involve the condemnation of some current behavior or policy and the advocating of a solution to the identified problem. Isocrates found these types of speeches to be of great value to the development of his students. “Speeches which denounce our current mistakes are much more useful and more powerful than those which eulogize our past deeds, and likewise, those which advise what we must do are better than those which narrate our history” (2000, p. 217). He concluded that these types of speeches are especially important because their products are rarer, more difficult to create, and require a more “acute mind” (p. 220). If forensics was oriented only to towards the achievement of competitive goals, then there would be no need to concern itself with the problems of modern society.

4) Forensics Corrupts Youth by Teaching Students Values and Traditions Not In Line with Ethical Reasoning and Thinking

Perhaps the most damaging critique has been left for last. Several current and former coaches have charged that forensics fails to teach students ethical reasoning and thinking and instead teaches students only to value the end of trophies and competitive success (Billings, 2002; Burnett, Brand, & Meister, 2003; Kelly & Richardson, 2008; Richardson & Richardson, 2010). This is a hard claim to attack in part because the coaches put forth this claim without either data or a sufficient warrant, something a teacher of logic like Isocrates would be sure to notice. For example, Burnett, Brand, and Meister (2003) offer no hard proof of the failures of forensics and instead rely on an ideological mythic critique of the activity that only succeeds if one accepts the unproven claims that: 1) education and competition are mutually exclusive; and 2) competitors and coaches value winning more than ethical or educational values. Ironically, to accept Burnett et al.’s argument (2003) premise, you must first accept their conclusion. Additionally, none of the critiques supported their claims through survey research talking to past or present students, outcome-based statistical analysis of students’ performances, or even anecdotal evidence. When defending himself against similar charges, Isocrates questions the lack of proof. The response he offered to the original Lysimachus applies equally well to the Lysimachus he might face today. Isocrates wrote, “For he ought to show the speeches by which I corrupt my students, and name the students who have become worse through association with me. As it is, he has done none of these things” (2000, p. 222).

One practice critics often point to as being unethical, or at the very least uneducational, is the practice of coaches giving students topics to speak about. Billings (2005) would view this as part of the mastery of the “success formula.” Coaches who know the formula or type of topics that will be successful choose them and take away students’ abilities to discuss the issues that concern them. First, I must acknowledge that I believe the instances of this happening have been greatly overstated. Rarely, if ever, have I heard or witnessed a coach assigning a student a topic and forcing them to do it. I do not believe this practice takes place, and if it does, it accounts for such a small percentage of students’ experiences that it does not bear discussing. The far more common scenario that occurs, from what has been gathered during experiences at three different universities and talk with numerous other coaches is that coaches put together a list of topics which they find interesting and which will allow students to be competitively successful. Students who have been unable to find a topic on their own can

then examine the list and, through conversations with coaches, select a topic that appeals to them. The process of finding a good speech topic or piece of literature is hard, and one of our jobs as coaches is to aid students in helping them select viable topics and pieces to perform. Additionally, as students get older and more experienced, they are able to find their own topics and literature and need less guidance.

Isocrates would find these practices to be ethical. Writing in *Antidosis*, Isocrates discusses the need for teachers to give their students good topics on which to speak. According to Isocrates, this process was necessary for the growth of the student. He claimed that giving students good topics to consider ennobles those students. The contemplation of good topics encourages civic and critical thinking and forces the student to contemplate the world beyond their own lives. “Someone who chooses to speak and write speeches worthy of praise and honor will not possibly select topics that are unjust or insignificant... but those public issues which are important and noble and promote human welfare” (Mirhady & Too, 2000, p. 255). The complete nature of speech leads students to talk about issues and concerns central to welfare of their audience. Forensics competitions are routinely judged by members outside the forensics community and in order to be successful, students must choose topics that appeal to these judges as well. Perhaps the best example of the need to do this is the Interstate Oratorical competition, where the final round is judged by esteemed citizens from outside the forensics community. Students competing here must choose topics and construct speeches capable of persuading these non-forensicators. “I would surely exhort those who live under democracy to consider the interest of the people” (p. 219). Thus, we ought to see the choosing of topics that interest our audience as a good thing, because it forces students and coaches to consider their audiences.

Although my experiences are only anecdotal, I have known many students on the teams I have been a part of and on other teams, who began the year with a topic a coach helped them select, one they would have never come to on their own, and through the process of research and learning about the topic, developed a passion for the topic. When students join teams as freshmen, their worldviews and experiences are limited. One of the goals of higher education in both Isocrates’ and our time is to expose students to concepts and ideas they would not otherwise have been exposed to. Again, I am not advocating for coaches to assign topics to students, but rather help students find a topic that interests them and will ennoble them is one of the vital duties we have as coaches.

I expect that some may take issue with my earlier statement, when I noted that my goal is to help find students topics that will interest them and allow them to be competitively successful. The selection of topics for competitive reasons was a practiced greatly derided by Burnett et. al (2003) as being one that puts winning above education. However, having a topic that interests the speaker and the audience is the essence of eloquence and virtue as defined by Isocrates (Mirhady & Too, 2000). The essence of the concept *karios* is the ability to adapt to an audience and understand their circumstances. One cannot be truly eloquent in Isocrates’ mind if that person speaks on topics that interest only him- or herself or in a manner that is off-putting to the audience. Furthermore, to return to the previous discussion of “real world” skills, Isocrates argued that to understand *karios* was the most important real world skill a student could learn.

The claim of corrupting the youth by teaching them poor values is a serious one. After all, it was this same claim that led to the death of the great teacher Socrates. It was

also a claim that Isocrates was forced to confront in his own time, and the defense he offered is one which we ought to examine. The Isocratic ethic says that teachers are responsible for the actions of their students. He believed that a teacher serves as a model for his students, and he went to great lengths in *Antidosis* to defend the lives of his students (2000). Given all the time he spent with his students, literally years, one would hope his teachings and beliefs would rub off on them. Let us follow the lead of Isocrates and examine the ethicality of our activity by examining the students it attracts and produces.

Even the most strident critics of forensics must concede that the activity has attracted some of the best and brightest high school and college students in the nation. One must therefore wonder: What do these great students see in this activity if the only benefit it provides is a few pieces of cheap metal and plastic? In addition to attracting great students, forensics has produced a litany of noteworthy individuals. The alumni of this activity include members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives, Supreme Court justices, award-winning actors and actresses, media moguls, prominent journalists, and some of the nation's most forward thinking and progressive minds. As Isocrates (2000) said, "If I was responsible for none of their accomplishments but they were simply my friends and associates, I think even this is an adequate defense against the charge I face" (p. 223).

Additionally, participation in high school forensics is a great aid to many in getting into the best colleges in the nation because admission counselors believe that competition in speech and debate prepares students for the rigors of higher education (Luong, 2000). A position paper published by the National Forensics League (2011) noted numerous studies prove students involved in speech and debate display higher levels of critical thinking and participation in forensics boosts retention and graduation rates. It would seem, therefore, that this activity has attracted high quality students, has high quality alumni, and is acknowledged by outsiders to the community as producing and attracting great students. Isocrates told the jury in *Antidosis* that if his students were good people who had helped Athens, then they should be praised for their actions. He continued, "However, if they turned out to be wicked and the sort of men who denounce (*phainein*) others, indict (*graphesthai*) them, lay charges, and desire their goods, then punish me" (p. 223). Burnett (2002) even conceded this point when she stated that her great joy as a coach came from working with wonderful students and that her day was brightened by hearing from former students, proof that she has found this activity attracts and produces great students.

Furthermore, Isocrates (2000) noted that if he offered students nothing but corruption, then they would not travel from far and wide to learn from him. "It is evident that people travel by ship, pay money, and got to all sorts of trouble because they think they will become better and that their educators here will be more intelligent than those at home" (p. 247). Many students involved in forensics chose to go to their university because of the education and coaching offered by the school's forensics program. Additionally, Isocrates pointed out that if he truly corrupted students then it would not be Lysimachus who would be bringing charges against him, but the parents and loved ones of the students he corrupts. "Instead they bring me their sons, pay my fees, and rejoice when they see them spending the day with me, while the sycophants slander us and give us trouble" (p. 249). Similarly, if forensics offered students nothing of value and taught

them poor values, then parents should be lining up to complain about our activity, but instead they have proven to be some of our strongest supporters.

Lysimachus might still object to the value of the activity, arguing that these successful students are merely anomalies or outliers (although, in fact, the list of successful former forensicators is so long, we could easily fill a year's worth of this journal's pages with their names), Isocrates would still have no problem rebuking this claim. For, in Isocrates' defense of himself and his craft, he points not only to the examples of his best students but to the general practice of all his students when compared to the general population of their peers. He noted that while the young men entering his academia are hard at work, those outside it "spend their youth in drink, social gatherings, amusements, and games, while neglecting the serious business of self improvement" (p. 257). While I might not go so far in my condemnation of how the average college student spends his or her free time, I will say that if you compare those students who spend their weekends at forensics tournaments to those students who spend their weekend drinking, partying, and seeking amusement, there is little doubt as to who is having the more educational experience.

CONCLUSION

Reading this essay has provided the reader with another tool to use in defending competitive forensics. A wide variety of challenges will face our community in the coming years, and we ought to take every opportunity we have to defend forensics in every way that we can. The work of Isocrates provides a unique and thus far untapped resource for justifying the budgets, course releases, and time commitment needed to field a forensics team. The rhetoric of ancient Greece and Rome possess ethos, pathos, and logos that are useful when debating critics of the activity or when communicating to those unfamiliar with it. In addition to the excellent qualitative and quantitative work currently being done, we ought to create rhetorical defenses for the activity as well.

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