

Re-examining Competition and Education in Collegiate Forensics Establishing the Need for a Pedagogical Prerogative Perspective

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Abstract

The authors examine the dominant metaphors used to guide collegiate forensics practice during the last four decades. The interplay between education and competition serve as a focus for the analysis. The authors establish the need for a pedagogical prerogative perspective as a means of enhancing the educational value of intercollegiate individual events.

Introduction

The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are generally or equally educative.

John Dewey (1938)

The crowd gathers, 80,000 strong, in the stadium named after a seemingly irrelevant corporation, to watch the nation's best collegiate male specimen attempt to move an oblong leather ball across a line marked on the field, repeatedly. The overgrown specimen line up across from one another. Then, at the command of the smallish one who cowers behind the mass of muscled humanity, they hurl themselves at one another, resulting in a pile of flesh and dirt and sometimes blood. Then, with 80 million more viewing at home, and with 30-second spots costing seemingly irrelevant corporations millions, they line up and do it again. All are witnessing college football's national championship.

Four months later, 80 somberly dressed people have packed into a rarely used classroom on the campus of a seemingly irrelevant college or university to witness the nation's six most articulate specimen and speciwomen attempt to answer questions related to a variety of the most compelling international issues of our day --- in five to seven minutes after 30 minute of preparation, of course. And they talk. They speak of wars and famines, of peoples and places whose names are difficult to pronounce, of disease and disaster and dirty deeds of seemingly irrelevant corporations. Often they make us aware of scenes we would rather not contemplate, of piles of flesh and dirt and sometimes blood. Few are witnessing college forensics' national championship in extemporaneous speaking.

Competition is a great teacher. This assertion provides not only the philosophical foundation for forensic activity, but it serves to cohere disparate educational entities under a forensic umbrella. However, as Dewey suggests and as the contrasting in-

troductory scenarios depict, not all experiences are "equally educative." Beyond the obvious troubling conclusions that can be drawn regarding societal values, the contrasting narratives reveal much about the often tenuous relationship between competition and education. While both cases are undeniably competitive and to varying degrees educational, at their essence they differ in the nature of the educational experience. When one poses the question (as one always should), "What is being taught?" the contrasting "intrinsic benefits" (Hinck, 2003) emerge. Football pedagogy develops mainly athletic skills—strength, speed, quickness, agility for primarily athletic purposes—blocking, tackling, running, passing, etc. Forensic pedagogy enhances the following: research skills, critical thinking, contextual analysis, topic expertise, organizational skills, argument support and development, and delivery competence, to name a few. The learning objectives associated with speech competition tend toward the academic and cognitive realms, ideally. However, when these core values are not consistently rewarded through competition, then the competition itself ceases to serve highly educative ends. Forensic competition that rewards strict adherence to unwritten rules, a fascination with insular fads and whims, a preoccupation with delivery nuance and affected displays of performance technique over more substantive argumentative and rhetorical concerns teaches students the wrong lessons.

Let us be clear. We do not join the chorus of voices who decry forensic competition. Rather, our contention is with competition divorced from virtuous pedagogy. We must ask, "What are we teaching?"

In order to answer this question that is central to our professional existence, we will examine the guiding perspectives that have shaped forensic education over the past four decades and suggest a new approach grounded in pedagogical prerogatives.

Forensics as Laboratory

The 1974 National Developmental Conference on Forensics established the laboratory metaphor as a means of explaining the basic function of forensics activity. The Sedalia Conference concluded that "forensics activities...are laboratories for helping students to understand and communicate various forms of argument more effectively in a variety of contexts with a variety of audiences" (McBath, 1975, p. 11). A

decade later, the guiding metaphor was reaffirmed at the Evanston Conference (McBath, 1984). No perspective on forensics has received more scholarly attention (Harris et al., 1986; Kay, 1990; Aden, 1991; Dreibelbis and Gullifer, 1992; Friedly, 1992, Swanson, 1992; Zeuschner, 1992).

The laboratory is a place where experimental research is conducted in order to test hypotheses and discover new truths. The forensic laboratory provides a learning context for students and researchers. The metaphor serves to highlight the benefits of student experimentation with communicative choices within the laboratory. It also allows for the gaining of new knowledge through studies conducted by communication researchers. From both perspectives, the goal of the laboratory experiment is education. Kay (1990, p. 63) refers to “providing a laboratory in which students can learn about human communication” as “the fundamental goal upon which our activity is based.”

Despite its educational focus and longevity, the laboratory metaphor has met with several detractors. Aden (1991) delivered the most comprehensive philosophical criticism of the perspective. The scientific and empirical implications of the metaphor proved misleading to him. As Aden (1991, p. 99) noted, “judges/critics and students may mistakenly assume that there are ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ approaches...rather than avenues that are more or less educational...” In fact, Aden argued, the laboratory metaphor had the potential to “limit the educational value of forensics” (p. 100). He described the nature of laboratories as “controlled, secretive, run by elites, sterile, and involving the manipulation of variables” (p. 100). Beyond philosophical limitations, perhaps the most significant shortcoming of the laboratory metaphor is its irrelevance to actual forensics practice. While Kay (1990) offered a vigorous defense of the pedagogical foundation established by the metaphor, he observed, “there is good reason to believe that the laboratory notion is often seen as only incidental to competitive forensics. Competitors and judges alike are usually more interested in the activity of forensics than the object of that activity.” (p. 64). A discussion of the foundational metaphor inevitably leads to the apparent strain between education and competition.

Forensics as Argument

The close association of the argumentative perspective with the laboratory metaphor makes it almost impossible to consider them separately. Whereas the laboratory furnished the context for learning, the content of the teaching was instruction in argumentation. The First National Developmental Conference on Forensics affirmed the centrality of this perspective through its conference publication titled *Forensics as Communication: The Argumentative Perspective* (McBath, 1975).

They defined forensics as “an educational activity primarily concerned with using an argumentative perspective in examining problems and communicating with people” (McBath, 1975, p. 11). Argument provided both a focus for educational inquiry and a convenient umbrella under which members of debate and individual-events communities could unite.

One should note that by the time of the Sedalia conference in 1974, intercollegiate competition in debate and various individual events had existed for decades. The conception of the argumentative perspective represented an attempt to provide a focus for forensic instruction that would unify disparate factions of the forensics community and justify forensic practice to administrators and the academic community at large. While there is not doubt that early forensic educations such as Ehninger and Ziegelmüller emphasized a pedagogical approach to forensic activity, the fact remains that competitive practices existed before comprehensive statements of theory and perspective. An *ex post facto* means of discovery may help to explain the lack of scholarship generated by the argumentative perspective.

The argumentative perspective has proven to be a much better “fit” for debate than for individual events. Kay (1990) observed that forensic educators, particularly those in individual events, have been “relatively unconcerned” with developing a theory of argument. He quotes from Larson and O’Rourke who claim that while the argumentative perspective has generated useful inquiry in the field of debate, “the literature on the use of argumentation in individual events is almost nil” (p. 65). Aden (1991) concludes that the argumentative approach failed to “capture the imagination” of forensic scholars (p. 101).

An obvious reason for the lack of commitment to an argumentative perspective emerges from the essence of the various forensic activities. While argumentation is central to all forms of debate, its relevance to many of the individual events is peripheral at best. Oral-interpretation events certainly lack an inherent dependence on argumentation. Yes, argumentative approaches to oral interpretation have been developed (VerLinden, 1987), and increasingly judges seem to expect an explicit argumentative statement, but this approach lacks theoretical support. It forces students to abandon the subtleties and ambiguities often intended by authors, and it offers unclear argumentative evaluative criteria in the place of a body of time-tested criteria offered by performance scholars (Richardson, 2006). In short, it removes the literary from the interpretation of literature. In events like *Impromptu Speaking* and *Rhetorical Criticism*, places where argumentation should be central, performance norms routinely trump argumentative concerns. As a result, the absence of a systematic, pedagogical focus leads to an overemphasis of argumentation in realms where argu-

ment is marginal and a disturbing lack of concern for argumentative development in events where it is vital.

Forensics as Liberal Art

In response to the perceived limitations of the laboratory metaphor, Aden (1991) offered a liberal arts perspective on forensics, claiming that the activity is “most educational...when it is viewed as a liberal art” (p. 101). He contrasts the scientific language of the laboratory metaphor and its dependence on existing knowledge with the independent, creative spirit of the liberal arts paradigm which empowers individuals to seek new answers and questions, Whereas the laboratory metaphor enjoined the argumentative perspective for theoretical grounding, the liberal arts approach sought rhetorical justification. According to Aden, placing rhetoric at the heart of forensic inquiry broadened the scope of legitimate forensic activity, and it empowered individuals by increasing the significance of the value of personal perspective. Given the place of rhetorical studies within the larger field of communication, the focus seems to be logical, pedagogical, and conveniently marketable. a rhetoric-centered approach seems more defensible than an argument-centered one in light of feminist and postmodern criticism. Teaching students to think critically and creatively in various rhetorical contexts would appear to be a valuable foundation for forensics pedagogy. However, the failure to inspire a systematic approach to forensic education and its profound lack of impact on forensic competition exceeds even the ineffectiveness of the laboratory argumentative model. Beyond Bartanen’s 1998 article, few scholars have embraced the perspective in published form. And while many directors of forensics support the notion of forensics as both a liberal art and a laboratory, competitive practices generally mirror other concerns.

The liberal arts goal of fostering independent thinking is sadly lacking in several areas of individual-events competition. Current practice in impromptu speaking serves as an unfortunate example. Contemporary “impromptu” speakers attempt to exemplify generic “truths” drawn from, or perhaps somehow indirectly related to, quotations by choosing from lists of previously practiced examples. The event is so clearly example dependent that a speaker who attempts original thought through use of another means of support, like explanation, will undoubtedly suffer competitively. In fact, to attempt any strategy outside of the well-worn examples is to risk minor non-fluency, which in the competitive paradigm is akin to forensic suicide.

An area that traditionally emphasized creativity in the invention process is After-Dinner Speaking. Here, once again, the student of the liberal arts is discouraged. Judge critiques routinely reflect an insistence on problem-cause-solution formatting.

Speakers who take the risk of not employing laugh lines every 5 to 10 seconds are often criticized for a lack of humor. As judges become more rigid in their fad-driven paradigms, critical and creative thinking are sacrificed on the altar of competition. Forensic practice does not merely fail to reward independent thinking; it often actively squelches it.

Forensic Education as Myth

The time has come to stop deceiving ourselves and our administrators about the educational value of forensics. (Padrow, 1956, p. 206)

This quotation introduces Burnett, Brand and Meister’s 2003 critique of forensic education. Interestingly, Padrow’s quotation was offered a decade and a half before comprehensive national tournaments in individual events were held. Certainly, it was well before the preponderance of tournaments, journals, programs and program graduates that have emerged since the early 1970s. And consequently, it was well before the very practices and procedures against which the authors rail.

The educational-myth perspective posits that the “educational value of forensics” represents a rhetorical strategy designed to accomplish the following:

housing the activity in departments of speech/communication, labeling forensics a ‘co-curricular,’ not ‘extracurricular,’ activity, attracting new students, soliciting funding for tournament travel, and even for pleading with universities not to eliminate entire speech/communication departments. (Burnett, Brand, & Meister, 2003, p. 12)

In an earlier article (2001), the authors argue that the structure and discourse of individual-event organizations emphasize competition to the exclusion of education. They note, competitive pressures create abuses in forensics” (pp. 107-108).

Anyone who has been around forensics very long can attest to the assertion that, indeed, ethical abuses have occurred and that their motivation, directly or indirectly, is most likely competitive in nature. Certainly, an emphasis on competition over education may contribute to unethical behavior. However, to discount the entirety of forensic education as myth requires substantial justification. In order to establish the myth, Burnett et al. (2003) theorize that the forensic educator functions as mythic hero, whose hard work in achieving competitive ends serves in the mythic framework as virtuous pedagogy, thus masking its true motive, which is competition. While the authors offer the myth as a compelling grand narrative, they fail to provide a single example of its use or development in the forensics community. No language evidence supports the educator a hero, or education as virtuous mask

assumptions. In fact, the stark reality of the examples offered to support the myth-- “staying up late working with students, calling for work sessions on weekends, discussing ballots in the van on a long ride home, or making changes in debate cases or speeches to improve the chances of winning at the next tournament” (p. 14)—actually undermine the mythic assertion. The claim that these activities are wholly competitive and therefore inherently not educational nor virtuous appears to be a hasty generalization founded in a mistrust of competition. Even though the authors claim to understand that competition can serve educational ends, their polarizing language and vilification of all things competitive presents a clearly dichotomous perception of the relationships between education and competition.

Hinck’s (2003) response to Burnett, Brand and Meister should be required reading for forensic professionals. While agreeing with many of the criticisms of current forensic practices, Hinck dispels the “education myth” myth by delineating educational benefits related specifically to forensic competition and ones rooted more generally in competition itself. Studies by Rogers (2005) and Allen, Berkowitz, Hunt and Loudon (1999) provide quantitative support for the educational benefits of forensic participation. In the face of an ill-defined myth, the tangible educational benefits of competitive forensics are reaffirmed. However, the forensic education as myth perspective serves as a cautionary reminder of the dangers of an over-competitive spirit.

Forensics as Athletic Competition

No one is arguing for forensics to be included as an Olympic event. And while these competitions share a common Greek heritage, and in more contemporary times over-enthusiastically blocked duos require more inordinate display of athletic prowess, forensics and athletics naturally occupy different fields of existence. Yet in the form of a simile, to say that forensics is like athletic competition is to articulate the predominant guiding force, both philosophically and pragmatically, in forensics today. Community indifference and inaction allow pedagogically unsound practices to flourish in contemporary forensic activity.

The absence of the athletic metaphor in forensic literature belies its pervasiveness in forensic activity. Forensic educators who may be reluctant to publicly endorse an athletic model support its persistence through practice. In athletic competition, the game itself is wholly self-sufficient. Football coaches, fans and analysts rarely discuss the educational value or learning outcomes of particular competitions. The competition is a well-established game that has provided entertainment and economic advantages for decades.

From its conception as a game, football has inherently involved competition. The same cannot be

said of speech. People were expressing themselves for a variety of reasons long before speech competitions existed. When a team wins at football, it is understood that it has scored more points within the confines of a given game. But how does one win at speech? Since speech as an activity is not inherently competitive, it is reasonable to assume that objectives, rules and aesthetic ideals would need to be developed to define success in the speech-competition context. If the purpose of forensic activity is education, then competitive practices would need to be developed that foster achievement of that goal. Football will always be football.

But competition in speech may reference a variety of activities. The compelling question that demands our attention is at what are we competing? Unfortunately, through the years, the question has been answered with brief event descriptions, minimal rules, educational and enlightening convention panels, and tournament practices that tend to enhance the “playing of the game” while ignoring the pedagogical concerns of forensic educators. Athletics exists within the game, which is exactly the way that forensics has been treated. Regardless of what is being taught, the game and the competition, in and of itself, is seen as a worthy endeavor: What wins is good, and what is good, wins. Thus, from a Burkeian (1945) perspective, the forensic drama that ideally features the purpose of education through the agency of competition is upstaged by a drama whose purpose is winning. By allowing forensics to naturally devolve, forensic educators have opened the door for critiques like the one offered by Burnett, Brand and Meister. Valuable pedagogy does not inherently reside in speech competition. Our students are not blocking and tackling. Forensic pedagogy must be vigilantly nurtured by caring professionals.

The preponderance of unwritten rules represents a problem perpetuated by the indifference of the athletic perspective. Several researchers acknowledge the existence of subcultural norms that function as rules within the forensic community (For example, see Burnett, Brand and Meister, 2003; Hinck, 2003; Paine, 2005; VerLinden, 1997.) The use of a preview statement in limited-preparation and public-address events is a good example. Tournament rules generally do not mention such a statement, yet it has been established as a standard for more than three decades. Forensic organizations should either agree publicly to encourage the use of such a statement, or agree that the use of a preview is optional. In the absence of such a statement, fledgling programs and novice speakers are placed at an obvious disadvantage.

Certainly, the potential for abuse is magnified when one considered various nuances of particular events. A research question in rhetorical criticism, for instance, has emerged as an unwritten rule for many judges. The question of the educational value

of such a question over a well-reasoned thesis statement is one that has yet to be considered beyond convention panel presentations. Yet it is clearly a part of the evaluative criteria of several judges. Interestingly, while a question is being forced on students in rhetorical criticism, the clear thesis statement has all but disappeared from other forms of public address. Statements such as, "In order to better understand..." (and then, quickly, on to the preview) have replaced traditional thesis statements. These are offered by way of example to illustrate the phenomenon of unwritten rules. While their educational value might be questionable, or perhaps quite great – who knows?—they function within the community to reveal "insiders." Programs that can afford to travel across the country and whose numbers of students and judges are sufficient to identify emerging fads and trends greatly benefit from the unwritten nature of the rules. Unwritten rules also possess the potential to elevate individual judges' preferences to the level of criteria. And so, the whim of a particular judge trumps any kind of established pedagogical criterion. In the absence of such criteria, it is often much easier to learn who is good over what is good, which may partially account for the fact that familiar speakers receive lower (better) ranks than unfamiliar ones (Richardson, 1994). An activity that lacks clear objectives, rules and ideals promotes hegemonic mediocrity.

An over emphasis of purely competitive ends may also lead to a disturbing isolation of students within the individual-events community. The very activity that potentially links students with significant issues and people can build a blinding hedge around the overly competitive. Hinck (2003) describes the dialectical tension that exists between the "public, community-oriented goal of our communication practices and the personal, or ego-oriented objective of competing for awards" (p. 69). Students may learn to view human tragedy as an opportunity for self-promotion. The Aristotelian notion of *ethos* gives way to the postmodern concept of *methos*. In Bitzer's (1968) terms, the exigence is not related to an honest crisis in the world that needs attention. The rhetoric instead is rooted in personal competitive success. In an era where the public voice is undergoing a profound credibility crisis, communication professionals are not helping by teaching students that issues are meant for selfish exploitation.

What are we teaching? A reality check is easily provided by exposing non-forensic audiences to forensic speeches. While our college classes are nearly always impressed by the content of the national final round speeches, the delivery is almost never appreciated. Over-enunciated phrases and overly polished verbal and nonverbal reactions sometimes elicit laughter, and not in after-dinner speaking. The competitive, more-is-better push is doing for individual events what it has done for NDT debate. These deli-

very choices represent responses to insular community norms. Students are being prepared for the next competition, not for public speaking in natural world contexts.

A myriad of other problems exist as a result of the predominance of the athletic perspective, not the least of which are ethical violations. Hinck's (2003) discussion of dialectical tensions in forensic activity highlights the difficult lines that forensic educators must draw. However, it is our contention that increased attention to rewarding those communicative efforts that reflect agreed-upon well-established pedagogical values will reduce dialectical tension and greatly increase the educational outcomes of forensic activity.

The distance between the forensic community's language and action is disturbing. Kay (1990) labeled it a "culture of self-contentment." A glance at the resolutions adopted at the Third National Developmental conference on Individual Events (Whitney, 1997) is insightful. The first resolution after the thanking of the hosts reads: "While competition and education are compatible, we believe that competitive ends that are exclusive of pedagogical ends are not conducive to forensics professionalism" (p. 3).

The Pedagogical Prerogative Perspective

It is the role and responsibility of each generation of directors of forensics to preserve the integrity of the activity as a unique learning environment and intensive teaching space. In this paper we assert the *Pedagogical Prerogative Perspective* as an epistemological foundation for an ontological product. The perspective is intended to celebrate and emphasize the philosophical foundation of forensics practice in order to promulgate the notion that the central concern of collegiate forensics is teaching communication in a fashion that meets the needs of exceptional students rather than a mechanism solely dedicated to "learning the value of competition." The activity engages the arts and sciences of oral interpretation, public address and argumentation/debate. In doing so, students are able to learn, through the study, training, and practice of these art forms, a wide variety of meaningful skills such as those articulated in the introduction to this paper. Yet, when a competitive paradigm is utilized as the primary lens through which a forensics program's value is assessed, the philosophical justification of forensics pedagogy receiving institutional support is problematized. More importantly, when competitive products are placed ahead of teaching priorities, then the value of forensics programs generally is problematized. Additionally, the products of forensics pedagogy are diminished, because students are not taught that competitive results are an act of the community honoring exceptional performance. Rather, as Burke conceived, our community often

teaches students to be “goaded by hierarchy” (Burke, 1984, p. xlii).

The *Pedagogical Prerogative Perspective* does not constitute the assertion of a wholly new idea. It is a device that seeks to answer the call of so many forensic educators, both present and published in the annals of disciplinary literature, that sought to rectify the problematic relationship between educational and competitive goal seeking in the collegiate forensics. The *Pedagogical Prerogative Perspective* is a mechanism for emphasizing and articulating the fundamental purpose of collegiate forensics; an instrument for shaping the *practice* of collegiate forensics.

The perspective features three key elements: pedagogical prerogatives, reshaping forensics administration, and recognizing competitive results as a communal act of “honoring.”

Pedagogical Prerogatives

As we stated earlier in this paper, “We do not join the chorus of voices who decry forensic competition. Rather, our contention is with competition divorced from virtuous pedagogy. We must ask, “What are we teaching?” Redefining events to include clearly designated pedagogical prerogatives rooted in communication, rhetorical and performance theory would answer this question. In 2006, the National Forensic Association adopted a comprehensive revision to the rules for Extemporaneous Speaking. At the end of the document that was presented to the membership for adoption, the Extemporaneous Speaking Committee included an addendum that stated, “The Extemporaneous Speaking Committee encourages the adoption of a set of pedagogical prerogatives in the form of educational objectives related to Extemporaneous Speaking.” This addendum is reflective of the need for the activity to emphasize answers to the question, “what are we teaching?” The *Pedagogical Prerogative Perspective* encourages those of us who administer collegiate forensics programs and activities to take an active role in confirming the educational foundation for the activity in a specific and public manner. The development of teaching objectives for each individual event would be in line with current, and increasingly common, requirements in universities and colleges, as well as, state departments of education throughout the United States. In traditional curricular offerings, institutions commonly require instructors, departments, and/or colleges to specifically identify learning objectives or outcomes in each course and program. These are mechanisms of assessment. Two primary forms of objectives exist. First, an *educational objective* is generally focused on the *instructor* behavior. Objectives are often articulated with language that emphasizes the content that the instructor will present or discuss during the course. Such statements shed light upon subjects and ma-

terial to which students will be exposed during the course.

Yet, the second form, a *student learning outcome*, differs in that it focuses on *student* behavior as a product of teaching and instruction. Learning outcomes emphasize the demonstration of performance skills, concepts and theories that students will be able explain and employ, and specific content that students will present or develop such as a research project (Howard, G. & Stanny, C. J., 2005). The *Pedagogical Prerogative Perspective* emphasizes the notion of student learning outcomes as a key feature in forensics pedagogy because the statements ground the collective community in a standard set of educational goals. Like a traditional classroom, accountability for the success or failure of developing performance products that reflect these goals lies with the teacher and student. Yet, the implementation of pedagogical prerogatives in all individual events would diminish the impact and importance of unwritten conventions and ungrounded evaluative philosophies that have done so much to undermine the value of this activity. Such action would compel the community to look first to these statements in coaching, teaching, learning, performance and assessment. Additionally, answers to the question of “what are we teaching?” would be placed at the forefront of our collective consideration of each individual event. The pedagogical goals of each event would, therefore, shape the fashion in which students are trained and how evidence of successful teaching is assessed.

Operationalizing these ideas would require forensic organizations to clearly define the learning outcomes associated with each event. A delineation of the expected outcomes and evaluative criteria derived from them could serve as a valuable explanatory guide for students, judges, coaches and administrators. The sponsoring forensic organization would provide the mechanism for implementation, but one possibility is that the individual events community could borrow a page from the debate handbook and set a date for the release of the various event descriptions, learning outcomes, evaluative criteria, etc. each season. The authors are not endorsing the establishment of narrow, rigid, prescriptive criteria nor are we offering any event criteria at all. We suggest that the community development of well-written learning outcomes and criteria will produce forensic competition that rewards independent thinking, creativity and critical inquiry.

Reshaping Forensics Administration

Promoting forensics practice that emphasizes the speechmaking and developmental performance processes is at the heart of this element of the *Pedagogical Prerogative Perspective*. For the collegiate forensics community at large, this entails administering competitive forensics experiences as *multi-*

institutional conference/classroom events. During the past three decades tournament experiences have increasingly moved toward fewer rounds, fewer judges, and, thus, fewer developmental performance opportunities for students. Additionally, the inclusion of non-competitive educational activities, such as lectures, discussion panels, and public debates, have become extremely rare. This shift is confounding given the unique educational opportunity that collegiate forensics presents to teachers and students. A forensics tournament has the potential to provide students with opportunities to present their work to instructors, teachers and scholars that are not employed by their institution. This configuration is certainly unique to forensics pedagogy. It is rare occasion indeed that a college basketball coach runs down to the opposing team's bench to provide some valuable feedback that, if accepted by the student athlete, may improve their performance skill set, knowledge or understanding. The uncommon nature of such an occurrence is precisely what makes collegiate forensics an activity that exists in a framework that stands in stark contrast to the athletic metaphor.

Collegiate forensics tournaments provide the opportunity for scholar-students to interact with and learn from dedicated faculty from other institutions. The theoretical structure of forensics competition justifies the descriptive phrase *multi-institutional conference/classroom events*. Yet, the conventional practice of administering forensics events is not commonly reflective of the philosophical foundation for the practice. Several national championship tournaments feature two judges in each preliminary round. Yet, this is an uncommon feature in the hundreds of invitational tournaments hosted by a multitude of institutions during the forensics season. The *Pedagogical Prerogative Perspective* encourages two actions in order to more strongly reflect the philosophical roots of the activity. First, as a community we should move back toward forensic tournament structures that provide more judges and more rounds of competition. The homogenization of tournament structures has diminished the experiential value of each individual event. The inclusion of unique features such as discussion panels, performance showcases or public debates within the time frame of an invitational tournament, would create a rich, memorable and potentially influential experience for students and coaches alike. At the very least, such inclusions would enrich the collective conversation about the fundamentals of the activity. Academic conferences have a long history of hosting a featured set of events such as NCA's Carroll Arnold Lecture Series. If we apply this structure to the model of a forensics tournament, then competitive rounds become the daily panel sessions and a tournament schedule is adjusted to accommodate the featured presentations or events.

We are not arguing that the importance of competitive rounds should be diminished by the inclusion of other activities. Rather, we are arguing that we, as a community, take full advantage of each *multi-institutional conference* by featuring more rounds, more judges and more conversation related to forensics pedagogy. When viewed from an institutional perspective, a collegiate forensics tournament is a special and unique learning environment. It is the call of the collegiate forensics community to make these events as substantive and engaging as possible.

Competitive Results as an act of "honoring"

Each year the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences grants awards for Best Actor, Best Picture, Best Director, and even scientific and technical awards, such as the infamous 2007 accolade granted to Christien Tinsley, "for the creation of the transfer techniques for creating and applying 2D and 3D makeup known as "Tinsley Transfers" (AMPAS, 2008). Similarly the American Theatre Wing recognizes outstanding stage performance, direction and production at the Tony Awards each year. These accolades often function as a motivating factor for performers, directors and producers to achieve exceptional performance results. Despite the very fact of the existence of bodies that recognize achievements on stage and screen, we would be justly challenged to produce significant evidence proving that the philosophical motivation of performances developed for the stage and screen are primarily competitive. The actress Reese Witherspoon eloquently framed this notion in her 2006 Best Actress acceptance speech at the Oscar Awards stating, "I want to say that Johnny Cash and June Carter had a wonderful tradition of honoring other artists and musicians and singers. And I really feel that tradition tonight."

The communication discipline has long been most closely associated with the phrase "arts and sciences." Hundreds of colleges and universities throughout the United States include the term "arts" or the phrase "arts and sciences" in their name. These symbols are reflective of the very foundation of rhetoric and communication studies. The term "arts" is commonly defined as, "subjects of study primarily concerned with the processes and products of human creativity and social life" (New Oxford American Dictionary, 2007). "Science" is defined as, "a systematically organized body of knowledge on a particular subject" (New Oxford American Dictionary, 2007). Clearly, neither of these terms includes any reference to *competition* as an inherent aspect of communication studies or pedagogy.

The discipline does not begin with an initial consideration of competition. So too, must our conception of intercollegiate forensics begin in a framework that excludes a valuation of competition. The central purpose for the inclusion of forensics in departmen-

tal and college programming is to provide a space for the practice and products of forensics pedagogy. Yet, during the last two hundred years, and especially the most recent thirty (as higher education resources have become more heavily scrutinized and requiring defense of allocation) the conversation and perspective of the forensics community have shifted to strongly competitive considerations. This move continues to threaten the very existence of the activity at the collegiate level. As programs are threatened, DOF's and other advocates for the activity often defend programs based on their competitive results. This defense does not translate well into a college-wide or university-wide discussion of "value based on available resources." Indeed, if there is any aspect of collegiate forensics that is deeply rooted in competition, it is the constant battle for resources and the preservation of programs.

This element of the *Pedagogical Prerogative Perspective* is one that encourages forensics educators to teach the same basic philosophy concerning awards that is celebrated by the Pulitzer prize board, which selects the winners that distinguished set of awards each year. As Rich Oppel (2008) wrote, "For Pulitzer board members, the hope is that winning a prize will be a beginning, not a final wreath on a winner's head."

The *Pedagogical Prerogative Perspective* has the potential to reconfigure our conception and practice of collegiate forensics. Adhering to this perspective will result in a significant refinement of current practice that strengthens the activity for years to come. The full consideration of the perspective emphasizes that competitive results will become the honoring element of the activity, instead of the cause for engaging in the activity in the first place.

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