grams. It is, they continue, the predominant model throughout the forensic community. The addition of graduate assistants or assistant coaches does not guarantee an increase in success for the program in question. Hard work in the form of longer hours, more practices and more personal attention, they conclude, is the answer to the coaching dilemma.

Divisionists point out that while some programs locked into the single coach model have consistently achieved success, the vast majority achieve transient results. While it may be the predominant model throughout the forensic community, the alternative model of a multiple coaching staff not only exists, but would seem to experience more long term stability in terms of competitive success. No one can argue with the success of Arkansas State University, a relative newcomer, or the perennial success of Southwest Baptist University.

Hard work may be one approach; but if we are willing to accept the critical role the coach plays in the success of any team, how could additional coaching resources not have a positive impact? Resource-rich programs can afford to hire additional expertise in the form of graduate assistants and assistant coaches. A single coach can only listen to so many practice rounds, offer so many perspectives and ideas and/or travel to only so many tournaments without getting behind in her or his professional duties and class work — not to mention family responsibilities. A larger potential judging pool also translates into a larger potential entry with fewer out of pocket expenses in terms of judge's fees pald. More graduate assistants also means more research and writing resources for the team.

Factor Three: Competitive Success requires access to sophisticated research tools.

The Lexis/Nexis debate is certainly not new.[3] Non-divisionists have argued that there is no correlation between Lexis/Nexis and perceptions of success. They argue that even the most resource-poor programs forced to fish in the backwaters of a tiny pond library can readily augment their competitive research base. First, it is possible to make road trips to other regional universities with better libraries. Second, interlibrary loan is available. Third, there are other internet research resources that are either free or available at a reduced rate (Adams, 1996; Collier, 1996). Finally, hard work and creativity should level the playing field for research poor programs through creative and/or narrow interpretations of the topic which are much less research demanding. Cost should not be a factor for the research end of the competitive field.

Divisionists continue to argue that research resources — and their associated costs — impact the odds of success. First, there is a measurable impact to on-line data research and retrieval systems. Honiball (1996) reports some interesting findings: Lexis/Nexis has a coefficient

3. For the most recent discussion see *The Southern Journal of Forensics*, 1 1, Fall 1996, 183-228.

of 14.2, which means everything else held equal if you have Lexis/Nexis you will receive 14.2 more CEDA points than an equal program without Lexis/Nexis. He also reported a strong correlation between the "machine," which was the total number of researchers, and increased success ratios.

An analysis of the data set within this article using a simple chi-square and phi coefficient[4] demonstrates that there is at least a strong perception of the correlation between Lexis/Nexis and competitive success even among nondivisionists (x2 = .2132 x 749 = **37.45**; a chi-square value of greater than 3.8, with one *df*, is significant at the .03 level). Thus, it can be concluded that Lexis/Nexis and competitive success are significantly related within the data set.

In addition, divisionists argue that not all programs have access to universities with better libraries. Some programs are relatively isolated. Additionally, some regional university libraries do not extend full privileges to students from other colleges. In any case, resources must still be allocated and expended for food, gasoline and photocopies. Interlibrary loan is often unavailable, slow and still costs money. Finally, while there are numerous free or reduced rate on-line data research and retrieval systems, their use still requires the allocation of resources. As hard as it is to believe in the current educational environment, many resource poor programs do not have access to a computer or on-line facilities. Taking laptops to tournaments to uplink between rounds would be out of the question.

In summary of the research resource thread, no one can argue that divisions would necessarily solve for the evidence disparity in debate. However, it is interesting to note that in this study 43% of those programs that identified themselves as "small" (resource-poor), 21% of the "medium" programs and 0% of those programs self-identified as "large" advanced the idea that the increased evidence burdens presented by Lexis/Nexis and other on-line data research and retrieval systems presented them with significant competitive barriers to success. The vast majority (87%) of those "small" programs had either already shifted or had expressed their intention to shift away from CEDA/NDT debate in the near future. Of those teams present at the 1998 National Parliamentary Debate Association's National Tournament, 72% had competed in CEDA within the past five years. Only 38% expressed the intent to do so during the 1998-99 competitive season. Three reasons emerged as significant: 1) Style (speed, procedurals) 85%; 2) Evidence/research burdens 76%; and 3) Theoretical Differences 29%.

The impacts from this shift are obvious. No organization can afford a mass exodus of its membership. A significant drop in membership within CEDA means smaller divisions at CEDA sanctioned tournaments which means fewer elimination rounds and break points.

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4. The number of degrees of freedom for this simple Chi-Square will always be 1. See Bruning and Kintz, 207-209.

Second, with fewer teams competing in CEDA divisions, local tournaments, in general, would get smaller and risk going out of business. This would necessitate a shift in travel to bigger, "national" tournaments for CEDA programs to remain competitive. The woes experienced by the NDT after the exodus of its membership into CEDA should serve as a powerful warning. One we ignore at our own peril. Finally, though the shift would increase membership in organizations which espouse other forms of debate, the pedagogical fallout would be difficult to justify. While it is not the intent of the author to disparage ANY form of debate, policy/evidence oriented debate — if done correctly — uniquely teaches research skills essential for academic pursuits such as graduate school, the proper use, testing and weighing of evidence, the in-depth examination of issues over extended periods of time, and finally, it forces students to adapt their approaches as they respond to meet challenges to their lines of argumentation throughout the course of the competitive season. In advancing their ten principles of Decision by Debate, Ehninger & Brockriede (1963, viii) point out that:

> "Research is an indispensable part of reflective decision-making. One does not become a debater at the moment he rises to speak or sits down to write. He becomes a debater long before — when he begins his study of the problem about which he will eventually propound judgments. Debate is a process that reaches from tentative explorations of subject matter to the final decision."

Of course, one must have access to research gathering opportunities to properly teach students how to take advantage of this facet of their education. These opportunities are not always equally available to all and often require the commitment of scare financial resources. The recent explosion of teams competing in the Parliamentary divisions at tournaments while CEDA Divisions beg to make semifinals is not only reflective of this discussion, but deeply troubling, as well.

In summary of the rhetoric, while obvious disparities among programs resource-bases may exist, proponents of the impetus towards the implementation of competitive divisions (divisionists) within the forensics community must closely examine two questions: 1) is there a compelling need to "level the playing field;" and 2) would the implementation of competitive divisions accrue solvent benefits which would answer the arguments advanced by non-divisionists?

THE STUDY: WOULD THE COMMUNITY SUPPORT RESOURCE BASED COMPETITIVE DIVISIONS?

Characteristics of the Sample

The scope and focus of this research was to collect data from a sample reflective of the active forensics community; in this case, competitive intercollegiate debate. In order to qualify for inclusion, the subjects

must be actively involved in directing/coaching/assistant coaching, assisting at the graduate assistant level or a student entered in competitive forensics tournaments. Inclusion was also extended to those who have participated in intercollegiate forensics activities within the past two years.

A purposeful and deliberately inclusive sample was collected at eleven regional tournaments and two tournaments with nationally competitive draws. In order to address concerns over regional bias and the applicability and validity of regional data to more generalized national conclusions, additional data was collected through mailings to the members of CEDA, NDT, Pi Kappa Delta and the NPDA. Two follow-up reminders were sent out by mail and internet, where applicable, at intervals of one month. Surveys were also solicited and collected at the NPDA National Tournament, the Public Debate Association National Finals Tournament and the 1997 NCA Convention. 749 surveys were collected (457 students, 62 graduate assistants; 79 assistant coaches; 131 head coaches/Directors of Forensics). National representativeness achieved face validity (NW-47; West-61; SoCal-34; RockyM-98; NC-84; MidAm-68; SC-132; SEC-106; SE-57; East-42).[5]

Issues of Self-Identification: Are differences perceptually or factually based.

One of the major criticisms of the "small" vs. "big" thread is that while some differences in resources may exist, those differences are either insignificant or exist only in the minds of some of the members of the community. Hence, the "resource challenged," as the argument goes, identify themselves as "small" and others as "big" withouut empirical support for their claim. The argument continues, that competitive "divisions" could not be implemented, because no real significant differences exist upon which to build a criteria for divisional eligibility. There is no valid method to empirically separate "small" and "medium" from "big." Besides, non-divisionists conclude, if differences do not really exist, then the argument for the need to "level the field" becomes moot.

In the past, divisionists have answered this line of argument by attempting to set up arbitrary standards for divisional membership based upon opinion. The argument, 'I believe that any program with an overall budget of more than — fill in the arbitrary amount X — is a "big" program; and thus, should not be allowed to compete against programs with lesser budgets,' is neither very persuasive nor particularly well thought out. First, everyone's opinion will differ. Who

5. While this breakout is by CEDA region and was aimed primarily at CEDA programs, responses from Parliamentary schools were included for three reasons: 1) little impact on the data (.17% of total N); 2) though many had recently abandoned CEDA due to issues of resource competitiveness (the vast majority 91%) expressed interest in returning to CEDA if the competitive field could be leveled); and 3) the concept

decides where to set the limit? 'Let's just set up a criteria for eligibility and see how it works,' just is not solvent planning. At some point, an arbitrary figure would be forced upon the community. Once that arbitrary amount is set, the lines quickly become so blurred that they are rendered useless. For example, if we set up a criterion that sets the Division 1 program eligibility at a minimum of $10,000, what do we do with program Y and their $9,973 budget? Do we bump them up or do we let them compete in Division 2 against Tiny U with their $1,200 budget? We either violate the criteria by bumping program Y up — and thus, the criteria serves no purpose since each decision is now made on a case-by-case basis and open to subjectivity — or we violate the spirit of the criteria by leaving a "bigger" fish (program Y) to take advantage of Tiny U and thus remain insolvent in our attempt to "level" the field. Non-divisionists correctly point out that this scenario — setting arbitrary criteria — only contributes to the problem divisionists had hoped to solve. No matter how you adjust the criteria, programs are eligible or ineligible based upon changing opinions which are applied in a case-by-case model.

In an attempt to "flatten" this "slippery slope," this work advances a model based upon grounded theory. That is, instead of proceeding under the assumption that differences exist, setting up a hypothesis that would manipulate the data set to force artificial validity, and thus "confirming" preconceived arbitrary limits, grounded theory presumes to let the data set "speak" for itself. If there are *measurable* differences which support *perceptual* differences, then the data set needs no manipulation to fit the hypothesis. If the data confirms that perceptions of size are reflected by measurable differences in resources then we confirm two things; 1) that differences in resources are not *just* perceptually based; and 2) that a criteria for building division eligibility need not be arbitrarily based.

Program data was derived directly from the respondents' surveys. Multiple responses were controlled for. The data set was divided into three, self-identified (perceptual) groups by asking each respondent to evaluate their program as either "small," "medium," or "large." Each perceptual group was then summed and averaged to examine the claim that differences were supported by measurable differences in resoource base. Those findings are reported in Table 1.

Table 1
Perceptual Differences and Resource Base

Program	Budget Range	Adjusted Budget	# tournaments	# of coaches	Schol. Budget	Schol: Full	Schol: Half	Schol: Partial
Small 357	5-10K	$8300	7.4	1.1	$2100	5%	15%	47%
Medium 202	15-20K	$17120	12.2	1.86	$6600	35%	50%	72%
Large 90	>20K	$26200	16.6	2.81	$11900	62%	73%	80%

Notes: Adjusted budget reflects the average for all programs within the category. Scholarship budget also reflects the average within category. Scholarships are reported as percentages (e.g. for those programs self-identified as "small," 5% had some full-time, 15% had some half-time, and 47% had some partial scholarships available for participation in forensics).

The data in Table 1 would seem to indicate face validity for the argument that there are *measurable* differences in resources that would support the community's perception that differences exist. To test the validity of these findings, Pearson's r correlational formula was used to derive coefficients to look for correlated relationships between the self-identified perceptions (small, medium and large) and the measurable resource variables. Table 2 reports those findings.

Table 2
Correlated Relationships for Identity Differences

Criteria Variable	Program Division		
	Small	Medium	Large
Budget:			
$0-12,000	**0.914**	-0.884	-0.999
$12-20,000	-0.8228	**0.764**	-0.997
$>20,000	-0.999	-0.791	**0.999**
# of Tournaments			
0-9	0.971	-0.774	-0.994
10-14	-0.863	**0.739**	-0.895
>15	-0.997	-0.927	**0.934**
# of Coaches			
1-1.5	**0.853**	-0.476	-0.565
1.6-2.5	-0.897	**0.739**	-0.593
>2.5	-0.992	-0.927	**0.877**
Scholarship Budgets			
0-5K	**0.902**	-0.735	-0.718
5-8K	-0.898	**0.885**	-0.854
>8K	-0.993	-0.963	**0.917**

All correlations were statistically significant at the p = 0.0001 level.

The data in Table 2 demonstrates very strong, positively correlated relationships between the self-identified perceptions of size (potential divisions) and their resource variables. Conclusions based upon this data set would be twofold: 1) There is a factual basis. grounded in quantitative empirical evidence, that supports the claim that differences in resources are not just perceptually based; and 2) A valid criteria for building division eligibility requirements can be scientifically advanced. The relative strength of the correlations, from +0.73 to +0.99, makes a persuasive argument that the majority of forensics programs would support the following resource based criteria:

Table 3
Resource-Based Criteria for Division Eligibility

Division	Criterion			
	Budget	# of Tournaments	# of Coaches	Scholarship Budget
Division III Small	0-$12,000	<9	1-1.5	0-$5,000
Division II Medium	$12-20,000	9-14	1.6-2.5	$5-8,000
Division I Large	>$20,000	15 and greater	>2.5	>$8,000

Therefore, under the Resource-Based Divisions Proposal, each forensic program would assess their current resource base in terms of four criteria: 1) Program Budget; 2) Number of Tournaments; 3) Number of Coaching Staff; and 4) Scholarship Budget. If Tiny Community College's program budget is $4,167.28, they anticipate travel to five tournaments this season, they have one coach and a part-time graduate student who helps, and they have four part- time scholarships that add up to $1,200.00, they would meet the criteria for voluntary inclusion under Division III status. It would be TCC's decision.

While a three divisional model may not be the best of all possible solutions for every program, it is not the intent of the author to advocate it as the only solvent solution. Perhaps, a two division model would more efficient. Perhaps, if a program met a minimum of three of the four criteria, they would qualify for voluntary inclusion. There are many possible solutions that could be advanced. However, two things can be concluded thus far from the data set: I) that it is possible to derive fair criteria that are both factually based and supported by the majority of the forensics community; and 2) that further adjustments could be worked out under that same empirically-based model.

Do differences in Resource-Bases Equate to Differences in Competitive Outcomes?

Obviously, this is the proverbial sixty-four thousand dollar question. The fact that we can advance a valid "scientific" model for the establishment of eligibility criteria for competitive divisions and that the majority of the forensic community would support their implementation does not prove that differences within the resource base exhibit measurable effects in terms of a program's competitive success. If measurable differences in resources equate to only perceived impacts in the competitive forensics arena, then our "solution" solves for nothing and may prove to be our Trojan Horse.

To test this perception, that differences in resources equate to measurable differences in success, the data set was reorganized by eliminating all data that was not provided by a Director of Forensics (n=151). This was done to control for the replication of program data by multiple respondents and to better control for accuracy. It was assumed that Directors of Forensics would have more specific knowledge regarding their program's resource base than either students or graduate assistants. The data set was further divided by pooling all respondents into their self-identified categories of "small," "medium," and "large." Pearson's r correlation formula was used to compare a category's resource base with their respective, averaged, self-reported CEDA rankings. Table 4 reports those general findings:

Table 4
Correlation Analysis of Program Size to Success

Division	CEDA Ranking			
	Top 20	Top 30	Top 50	Top 100
Small	0.001	0.051	0.344	0.783
Medium	0.013	0.091	0.587	0.993
Large	0.890	0.913	0.136	0.005

Pearson Correlation Coefficients / prob > |R| under HO: Rho=0 / N = 151
all correlations significant at p = 0.0001

Table 4 seems to indicate that a very specific and significant correlation between a program's perception of its size, based upon its available resource base, and its final CEDA rankings exists.

While these findings are interesting, a more sophisticated statistical analysis was required to turn these general tendencies into quantifiable impacts. Specific correlated comparisons of verifiable resources to specific CEDA rankings were required. Fortunately, 93 respondents elected to forgo anonymity and identified their program by name. This made direct comparison of their resource base with their CEDA rankings possible. In order to strengthen the results through longitudinal analysis, the final CEDA rankings for the past five years were used. This eliminated seven respondents due to insufficient data yielding a final n of 86 programs. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation[6] formula was used to derive coefficients which were used to express a curvilinear relationship between specific resources and CEDA rankings (Budget r = +.83/t= ±3.67 [df=84]; Tournarnents r = +.73/t = ± 4.0l [df=84]). Two findings were significant (p=0.001):

6. For a full discussion of this technique see Brunning and Kintz, 152-155 or Frey, et. Al, 305-306.

1). After a budgetary base of $3,900, every $1,700 increase in operating budget equated to a 7 point rise in CEDA points up to a budget cap of approximately $15,800 where each further increase of $2,200 equated to a 4 point rise in CEDA points up to a budget cap of $24,600 where further statistically significant increases in CEDA points were not noted. This could be due to CEDA counting only a certain number of tournaments towards the final standings; and thus, programs "peak out" after a period of competition. A graphic representation of this relationship is offered in Table 5:

Table 5
Curvilinear Relationship between Program Budget and CEDA Rankings

CEDA Rankings:											
+70											
+63											
+56									x	x	x
+49								x			
+42							x				
+35						x					
+28					x						
+21				x							
+14			x								
+7		x									
Base Budget	$3900	5600	7300	9000	10700	12400	15800	18000	20200	22400	24600

In the application of this model, Program A with a budget of $5,000 can expect to observe the following: Program B ($10,100) 21 more points; Program C ($15,200) 42 more points; Program D ($20,200) 50 more points.

2). After a base of 5 tournaments, each subsequent tournament was worth an increase of 9 ranks on the final National standings up to a cap of nine tournaments. After nine tournaments, each additional tournament was worth an increase of 6 ranks up to a cap of 14 tournaments. After 14 tournaments no significant relationship was noted. Again, this may be due to the nature of the CEDA ranking system as noted in finding one. Table 6 plots the curvilinear relationship between tournament participation and the correlated rise in CEDA rankings.

Table 6
Curvilinear Relationship Between Tournament Participation and CEDA Rankings

CEDA Rankings:										
+66										x
+60									x	
+54								x		
+48							x			
+42						x				
+36					x					
+27				x						
+18			x							
+9		x								
Base Tournament	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14

Note: Findings are for National CEDA Rankings only. Regional standings were more complex due to the differences between regions; therefore, no attempt was made to correlate the curvilinear relationship for regional rankings.

In the application of this model, Program A with 5 tournaments can expect the following: Program B (9 tournaments) 36 ranks higher on the final standings; Program C (14 tournaments) 66 ranks higher.

These findings are significant in that they offer valid, empirical support to the argument that there is a positive relationship that is both measurable and significant between an increase in the resource-base of a program and an increase in that program's competitive success as reflected through CEDA rankings. While some may argue, and pedagogically so, that CEDA rankings are only one method of measuring a program's success, rankings remain the most often cited empirical measurement method in use today. CEDA, NDT, NPDA, and PDA all use rankings to make comparisons of relative success between and among participants. The findings reported in Tables 5 & 6 advance the argument that resources do impact rankings beyond mere perception. Therefore, we can conclude that the playing field is not level. Earlier attempts (Rogers, 1991) to advance this relationship were weak in that they measured the impact of resources with regard to a single point in time. The fact that the data set is collected from active Forensics Directors and analyzed longitudinally only serves to strengthen the findings.

Is there a community of agreement within the forensic community?

The final area of analysis involved the potential for a community of agreement among members of the forensic community. As previously advanced, the relative strength of the correlations in Table 2, from +0.73 to +0.99, makes a persuasive argument that the majority of forensics programs would support a resource driven criteria for

competitive divisions within forensics. However, supporting a reasonable criteria for a divisions proposal and believing that it would engender significant, positive change could prove to be two different arguments. Once we recognize that the playing field is not level, do we, as a community, believe that anything can be done, or should be done, to level it?

To address this issue, the data was again reassembled by including all respondents in the data set. Responses to survey items specifically tailored to address the impact of divisions were recoded from a Likert scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* to numeric representations (strongly agree =+2; agree =+1; neither agree nor disagree = 0; disagree = -1; strongly disagree = -2). Since statements were positively worded towards divisions, a positive score would indicate a positive perception/support of divisions, while a negative score would indicate a negative perception/support of divisions. The data was then subdivided into three groupings (small, medium and large) and summed across subgroup, averaged and subjected to a simple t test to determine significant differences.

The conclusions from Table 7 are mixed. Without exception, programs which perceive of themselves as "small" support the formation of resource based, competitive divisions. Self-identified "medium" programs tended to support the positive impact of divisions through the leveling of the competitive playing field, but were cautious in their support for their formation and their belief that divisions would enhance competition. Medium programs also expressed strong support for voluntary participation and recording points separately. Those programs falling under the "big" subgrouping were resolute in their lack of support for the formation of competitive divisions. However, if divisions were advanced, they supported the concept of voluntary participation. Thus, programs that qualified for Division II or III competitive status could voluntarily opt to compete within Division I. Those results are reported in:

Table 7
Analysis of Perceptions of Impact of Divisions on Competitive Debate

Survey Item	Division Subgrouping		
	Small	Medium	Large
Would you support the formation of divisions?	+1.2	+0.5	-1.3
Would divisions enhance competition for participants	+1.3	+0.2	-1.7
Would divisions level the playing field for participants?	+1.1	+0.9	-1.8

Should participation in divisions be voluntary?	+1.4	+1.1	+0.9*
Should points for divisions be recorded separately?	+1.3	+0.9	-1.8

* All differences significant at $p < 0.0001$ except for item 4 where no statistical significance was found.

These somewhat skewed results were not unexpected. In the open-ended survey section three recurrent issues were noted: I) overall competitiveness; 2) the impact of fewer teams on the competitive matrix; and 3) the voluntary issue. Each of these potential "issues" are not without merit; however, the magnitude of their impacts could be easily controlled for. Let us examine each in turn.

First, several programs advanced the idea that some schools who might qualify for Division II or III competitive status might not want to give up the educational challenge and potential payoffs with their administrations that they accrue through competition against the "big guns." 'We may only win one or two rounds,' the argument goes, 'but if they are against big name schools, it looks great in the press release.' I would argue that this "practice" is not only deceptive, but it does not set a very pedagogically sound example for our students. Knowingly pitting your students against clearly superior teams in the hope of generating a favorable sound bite for your administration is weakly principled, at best. However for those who sincerely seek the educational challenge of competing against tougher programs, I would argue that the fact that acceptance of and competition within Division II or III status would be totally voluntary on the part of the participating programs renders this argument against divisions moot. Any program wishing to remain in Division I competition should continue to do so.

The second area of concern was that "relegating" several programs to Division II or III status would mean fewer teams at the Division I competitive level. 'We already have trouble with debate divisions making at tournaments,' it is argued. Non-divisionists conclude, '[F]ewer teams would also mean fewer elimination rounds, which means fewer CEDA points.' Four lines of analysis could be advanced to answer these concerns. First, with the merger of CEDA and NDT, it could be argued that most tournaments have never been healthier in terms of numbers. Second, even if the numbers in Division I do decreased, everyone would "suffer" equally from fewer CEDA points being available. Perhaps, 75 points would be enough to win the national championship rather than 100+.

Third, a majority of the Division I schools in contention for a ranking within the CEDA Top 20 are attending tournaments that the vast majority of Division II and III eligible programs do not currently attend; and thus, the points they would "take away" were not there

in the first place. Finally, if we, as a forensic community, are more concerned over the number of potential points a program brings to or takes away from the table than the quality of the education gained from the experience and the continued survival of that program at Tiny Community College, then we are ignoring some fundamental principles which were absolutely essential to our formation and that place the entire community at risk. To paraphrase from the words of another debate scholar, "CEDA is not reading the present very well." We ignore these fundamental problems at our own peril (Loge, 1991). Though uttered in another context — that of minority participation, Loge's words are no less valid in addressing issues of resource-challenged programs which often share a similar fate: a significant lack of representation and participation at the national level.

The final area of concern was the issue of voluntary participation. It is the position of the author that no school should be forced to accept or compete in Division II or III status. To do so would be self-defeating to the goals of the Divisions Proposal. The divisionists' stance is simply that any resource-challenged program should be given the opportunity to enter competition against similarly challenged programs. To do so should neither add to nor take away from the competition experienced by Division I programs.

CONCLUSIONS

While continued efforts to investigate this issue are necessary on a broader scale and generalized assumptions based upon this research should be made judiciously, the date set provides us with the empirically-based support to advance three basic conclusions:

First, the playing field is not level. Resources do make a difference - - one that is both significant and measurable. Resource challenged programs may seek and find transient success without adequate resources; however, long-term program success and survival are positively correlated with an increase in the program resource base. To continue to ignore this fact as mere perception is no longer possible.

Second, it is possible to level the playing field. It was not the intent of the author to offer a definitive answer to the divisions debate. Instead, a model based upon valid empirically-based data was advanced to more closely examine the issues central to the foundations of the rhetoric both for and against divisions and to respond to assertions advanced by members from both sides of the divisions aisle who argue that empirical data cannot be assembled which might lend definitive, factual insight into the question of the feasibility of divisions within competitive intercollegiate debate. The data indicates that a valid criteria for a Divisions Proposal could be derived and tested. While it remains to be seen how the forensics community will use this information, to ignore it would be to continue to imperil the overall viability of every program concerned within the competitive process.

Third, though not everyone would support the move of competitive intercollegiate forensics into resource driven divisions, it is possible to get a community of agreement with regard to what the criteria for inclusion should be and what that criteria might resemble. Though many have supported the idea of trying to level the playing field for resource-challenged programs, their concerns regarding how the eligibility criteria would be derived, its validity and whether this move to divisions would be voluntary have kept them guarded in their support. For any organization to step in and arbitrarily impose resource-based divisions upon its membership would be divisive, at best. However, providing a workable framework for voluntary inclusion is both scientifically possible and pedagogically sound. Again. the data seems to indicate that the vast majority of concerns are perceptual in nature and could easily be dealt with through the inclusion of a voluntary clause.

In conclusion, perhaps a resource-based, competitive divisions proposal could provide the stones necessary to slay the competitive giant. Voluntary inclusion/eligibility criteria would have to be carefully derived based upon scientific model backed by sound empirical methods and applied in an impartial, even-handed approach. While this proposal would not solve for all of the concerns which naturally result from a competitive-based activity, leveling the playing field for resource-challenged programs makes too much sense to ignore. Change is difficult, but without it systems stagnate and die. One does not need to look to far afield for examples of forensics programs and organizations in peril. We must, as a result, do everything possible ñ and practical — to reach out systemically as a community to encourage participation from every possible sector at every possible level. The Resource-Based Divisions Proposal is a giant stride towards the future.

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