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Presidents on Speechwriting: United States Presidents' Public Statements about Speechwriting

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Abstract: *Presidents not only use speechwriters; they also have views on speechwriting. This essay examines public presidential mentions of speechwriting and speechwriters to explore how POTUS's comments might reveal implicit and explicit criticisms and compliments of speechwriting as a component of presidential rhetoric. The essay also considers some advice offered by presidents on the practice of effective speechwriting. Presidents Johnson, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, Clinton, W. Bush, and Obama are featured.*

United States' presidents have spoken publicly about public speaking, sharing sentiments that value and devalue public speaking and even give advice about public speaking (Compton & Kaylor, 2012). Compton and Kaylor (2012) concluded:

> By considering how the nation's chief public speakers talk about public speaking, we can draw important implications concerning presidential rhetoric and discover interesting examples and adages to spark further pedagogical discussions of public speaking. From assessment of public speaking in general to specific remarks about speakers and speeches, we get a glimpse of how presidents view and do public speaking. (p. 12)

Not included in their analysis, however, were inclusions of presidents' comments about *speechwriting* and *speechwriters*.

And yet, I argue, analyzing other processes of public speaking—not just the act generally, but some of the variables, independently—is of value in our understanding of public speaking and political communication scholarship in general and of presidential rhetoric and speechwriting studies in particular. These are important research areas; as Waldman (2000) has argued, presidential speech "is where policy, politics, and presidential personality come together" (p. 15). More to the point of this study, a president's perspective on speechwriting matters to how the public views speechwriting, or at minimum, how the public perceives a president's view of speechwriting.

This essay examines public statements about speechwriting made

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by Presidents of the United States, including mentions of speechwriters and speechwriting by Presidents Johnson, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, Clinton, W. Bush, and Obama. To gather this data, the author searched *The American Presidency Project* (http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/) database for presidential references to speechwriting and speechwriter, then after repeated readings, categorized these references by shared themes and/or topic areas. At times, presidents merely mentioned speechwriters—not by name, but as a group (e.g., Carter, 1980; Johnson, 1966) or referred to an unnamed speechwriter (Bush, 2008c). But at other times, presidents made specific mentions of speechwriting—including 1) criticizing speechwriting; 2) complimenting speechwriting; and 3) mentioning, by name, specific speechwriters. As with presidential statements of public speaking (Compton & Kaylor, 2012), presidents also gave some advice about speechwriting. These themes, and others, will be explored in the rest of this essay to address the central research question: How have presidents characterized speechwriting and speechwriters during their presidential addresses? After answering this question, the essay turns to potential implications of these characterizations.

Criticisms of Speechwriting

Some presidential comments about speechwriting either project the practice of speechwriting itself in a poor light, or take a critical stance against specific types or approaches to speechwriting. We find such comments in the commentary of Presidents Johnson, Ford, Clinton, Bush, W. Bush, and Reagan.

President Johnson suggested a possible disconnect between a politician's convictions and speechwriters' words, noting during a dinner that prospective voters should know whether candidates are "the products of...a speechwriter's platitudes, or are they real men with ideas of their own? (Johnson, 1968, para 29). President Ford took a similar approach during dinner remarks, suggesting that authenticity was threatened by the use of speechwriters. He stated:

> Obviously, I have thrown away the text that my very dedicated and very competent speechwriters have prepared for me. [Laughter] But as I look over this audience, I'd like to talk straight from the shoulder—what I believe, what I feel is good for all of you, for Rhode Island, and more importantly, for the country. We've got a few problems in America and, to be frank and honest and candid, instead of trying to hide them and gloss them over, I think we ought to be very frank. (Ford, 1975, para 23)

The implications of this and similar sentiments is that speechwriting is less frank, less honest, less candid—more likely to "hide" truth, to "gloss them over."

In another setting, Ford made a distinction between his judgment and his speechwriters' judgment. During a news conference, Ann

Compton of ABC News asked:

> Mr. President, in a recent speech…you cut a line from your text in which you said something about the campaign should not be just a quiz show to see who gets to live in the White House for the next 4 years. And I assume you stand by that advance text. Were you trying to suggest that the debates have not been as effective as they should have been and they have not kept up the level of the campaign? (Ford, 1976b, para 100)

President Ford replied:

> Well, Ann, you know that you read the advance text. I hope you are listening when I speak. You know, on many occasions, I add a little here and I take something else out. Oftentimes, I don't get those texts until maybe a half, three-quarters of an hour before I make the speech. So, I make the judgment myself. Those are the recommendations of the speechwriters. Now, I didn't think that was an appropriate thing to say, and therefore, I didn't include it in the text that I gave to the meeting that you referred to…[F]or that reason I didn't think that sentence in that prepared text, which I deleted, reflected my own views. (Ford, 1976b, para 101)

This exchanged is packed with potential insight into Ford's views of, and practices with, speechwriting. He emphasizes that the record of his thoughts is what he actually says, not what his speechwriters wrote. He clarifies that he does not speak verbatim from manuscripts ("…I add a little here and I take something else out…"). He gives insight into the practicalities of his relationship with his speechwriters, claiming to not get texts until 30-45 minutes before a speech. These details, in addition to the sentiment of the entire passage, suggests a degree of disconnect between speechwriters and presidents.

Unlike the example above, where Ford decided not to say something in his prepared text, an example from President Clinton shows an instance of adding something to a text that the speechwriters did not include. Speaking at the opening of the National Summit on Africa, he said:

> But I have to tell you…my speechwriters were so sensitive, they didn't put this in the speech, but I want to say this: AIDS was a bigger problem in the United States a few years ago than it is today. (Clinton, 2000b)

Continuing an idea reflected in the earlier passage from Ford, Clinton notes that he is speaking off text to be more open, to be more forthcoming, than his speechwriters. Such an approach seems consistent with criticisms of speechwriting from earlier presidents, as reviewed earlier.

President Bush referenced a potential disconnect between what speechwriters write and more heartfelt messages. Presenting a National Security Medal, he said:

> I have a long list here that some very thorough speechwriter wrote

out about Bob Gates' accomplishments, his record, his service to his country, but I expect people here know this better than most. But you ought to know how much I trust him, admire him, and respect him. (Bush, 1993, para 11)

A speechwriter might know credentials, Bush seems to suggest, but anyone can know that; Bush contrasts his impressions as more relational, more affect-based.

Sometimes, presidential comments that seem to criticize speechwriting or speechwriters seem to be more in jest than a serious analysis of the practice or role of speechwriting. President Reagan offered such a seemingly tongue-in-cheek observation of the disconnect between politicians' and speechwriters' thoughts in this opening to remarks at an event honoring his wife, Nancy Reagan:

I came over on such short notice that I haven't had a chance to read my remarks yet. [Laughter] But the speechwriters usually do a pretty good job, so I'll just begin. I've known the guest of honor for many years. [Laughter] Well, yes, that's true. [Laughter] She was once one of the original members of the Reagan inner circle- [laughter] —well, I can't dispute that- [laughter] —who's been involved in some of the most delicate White House matters, such as high-level staff—maybe I better do this by myself. [Laughter] (Reagan, 1988, para 7)

Reagan's comments seem aimed for humor, for a self-deprecating comedic treatment of the relationship between the president and his speechwriters. President Clinton also points to a humorous disconnect in this passage from a speech delivered before the American Council on Education:

I got a letter that was sent to Terry Hartle by Jerome Supple, the president of Southwest Texas State in San Marcos... and I like it better than what the speechwriters put in, so I'm going to [read] what he actually said. [Laughter] (Clinton, 1995, para 31)

A few years later, Clinton, in remarks about Secretary Daley's speech, said:

Let me, first of all, say I thought Secretary Daley did a remarkable job today, and he was the funniest I have ever heard him—[laughter]—which means either that the Commerce Department has been very good for him, or he has found an extraordinary speechwriter. [Laughter] If it is the former, I thank you. If it is the latter, I would like that person dispatched to the White House this afternoon. [Laughter] (Clinton, 1999a, para 1)

During a presentation to William Safire, President George W. Bush took a humorous approach to speechwriting when he said:

As a young speechwriter drafting remarks for a New York City official, he used the word "indomitable." When they asked Bill to find a better speech-word, he suggested "indefatigable." [Laughter]

They fired him. [Laughter] We're a little more lenient about speechwriting here. [Laughter] (Bush, 2006, para 36)

These lines—followed in every instance by laughter from the audience—uses the speechwriting process more as a punchline than as a means for presidential rhetoric analysis.

In each of these instances, one finds an evaluation of speechwriting—in varying levels of explicitness and seriousness—often suggesting a disconnect between speechwriting and authenticity. In contrast, other mentions of speechwriting painted the practice of speechwriting in a more positive light, as we review next in remarks from Presidents Ford, Clinton, and Obama.

Bolstering Speechwriting

President Ford praised a man during a question-and-answer session for his creative word choices, saying: "I am going to recruit you as a speechwriter" (Ford, 1976a, para 35). President Obama, too, complimented the person introducing him at a fundraiser, beginning with: "Let me, first of all—I'd like to hire Alexa as my speechwriter. [Laughter] I don't usually get such elegant introductions" (Obama, 2011a, para 1).

Joking that his speechwriter knew more about his audience than he did, President Clinton said during his commencement address at Eastern Michigan University: "One of my speechwriters wrote me a line that said, 'Our economy is soaring higher than Swoop, the eagle.' [Laughter] He said you would know what that means" (Clinton, 2000c, para 9). (Swoop is the mascot of Eastern Michigan University).

During another speech, Clinton suggested that speechwriting was a way to express emotions—that speechwriting could be more than a career, but also, an opportunity to express oneself. He said: "One of my speechwriters has one disabled arm and one prosthesis. He writes a heck of a speech. It's nice that he's got a job, but it's more important that the feelings of his heart can be expressed" (Clinton, 2000f, para 34).

Clinton also used self-deprecation during the unveiling of the design for the William J. Clinton Presidential Library, praising his speechwriters while poking fun at himself:

You will be able to see drafts of the Inaugural addresses and what I wrote and what [my speechwriters] wrote, and that's good, because it will let a lot of my speechwriters off in history. People will think, "Gosh, what he marked out was better than what he said." But anyway, all that will be available, and I think that's very important. (Clinton, 2000g, para 12)

Here, Clinton praises his speechwriters, offering seemingly light-hearted mocking of himself while complimenting others.

In these segments, presidents offered a more flattering characteriza-

tion of the speechwriting process. In other remarks about speechwriting, presidents turned their focus to individual speechwriters. We consider next some of these mentions from Presidents Carter, Reagan, Bush, Clinton, W. Bush, and Obama.

Mentioning Specific Speechwriters

Presidents made references to specific speechwriters, including President Carter when asked about criticism launched by one of his former speechwriters, Jim Fallows (Carter, 1979), and President Reagan, who mentioned one speechwriter by name, John McLaughlin (Reagan, 1983). President Clinton mentioned Lane Kirkland's stint as speechwriter for Harry Truman (Clinton, 1994), as well as his own speechwriters, including Carolyn Curiel (Clinton, 1996), Paul Glastris (Clinton, 1999b), Samir Afridi (Clinton, 2000d), and Terry Edmonds (Clinton, 1997a; Clinton, 1997c; Clinton, 2000a; Clinton, 2000e). President Obama mentioned that it was one of his speechwriter's birthdays at a town hall meeting (Obama, 2011b) and noted at a St. Patrick's Day reception that his "new head speechwriter is a Keenan" (Obama, 2013b, para 6).

Other mentions went beyond naming speechwriters, and instead, complimented them. For example, at a funeral service for Tony Show, President George W. Bush said:

> He had the sometimes challenging distinction of working for two Presidents named Bush. As a speechwriter in my dad's administration, Tony tried to translate the President's policies into English. [Laughter] As a spokesman in my administration, Tony tried to translate my English into English. [Laughter] (Bush, 2008a, para 3)

During an interview, Bush offered this description of one of his speechwriters:

> The President: ...And then there's Gerson, who was very much involved with our policy on these issues, and he—I spent a lot of time with him; see, he was the speechwriter. And so the speechwriter got to spend a lot of time with the speechmaker. [Laughter]
>
> Mr. Warren. Plant a few seeds of thought. [Laughter]
>
> The President. It's harder to take words out of a speech than put them in at times. [Laughter] (Bush, 2008b, para 41)

President George W. Bush described a former White House speechwriter, William Safire, as "a voice of independence and principle" (Bush, 2006, para 21).

Still others used references to specific speechwriters for humor. After praising Bob Dole, President Bush (1992) said:

> But the lovely thing about it is the way he has conducted himself subsequent to, as Winston Churchill said, receiving "the Order of

the Boot" that I have received. I thought the speechwriter that wrote that, that I delivered last Saturday, was a little harsh in his assessment of what happened to me. Then I thought, "Well, listen, being in the company of Churchill ain't all bad." So I gave him a little raise and sent him back to Kentucky Fried Chicken. [Laughter] (para 15)

At a Gridiron Club dinner, President Obama told this joke:

After nine years, I finally said goodbye to my chief speechwriter, Jon Favreau. I watched him grow up. He's almost like a son to me, he's been with me so long. And I said to him when he first informed me of his decision, I said, "Favs, you can't leave." And he answered with three simple words: "Yes I can." [Laughter] Fortunately, he did not take the prompter on his way out. That would have been a problem. [Laughter] (Obama, 2013a, para 20)

President Bush joked about his "favorite speechwriter...a baseball great named Yogi Berra" (Bush, 1989, para 20), and more than a decade later, his son, President George W. Bush, picked up on this same theme:

Yogi's been an inspiration to me—[laughter] —not only because of his baseball skills but, of course, for the enduring mark he left on the English language. [Laughter] Some in the press corps here even think he might be my speechwriter. [Laughter] (Bush, 2001, para 13)

Like his father, W. Bush names a "speechwriter" as the basis for light-hearted humor—and in W. Bush's case, seems to also engage in some self-deprecating humor.

From mentions of specific speechwriters in passing, to paying tribute, to telling jokes, specific speechwriters have appeared in several instances of presidential rhetoric. In the next category, we turn from characterizations of speechwriting and mentions of specific speechwriters to explore instances of speechwriting advice offered by presidents in public address.

Speechwriting Advice

Just as presidents have offered advice about public speaking in their remarks (Compton & Kaylor, 2012), a few presidents have also offered some speechwriting advice, from an off-hand remark about researching speeches—in response to a question from a fifth-grader at a town hall meeting: "[M]y speechwriters use the Internet. They can do research on the Internet; they pull up articles and things" (Clinton, 1997b, para 72)—to lessons embedded in anecdotes:

President Franklin Roosevelt was a deeply religious man. On the day he died, he was working on a speech. And he would get these typewritten speeches that speechwriters would do and then he'd get his ink pen, and he'd scratch through the words and write the

words over and write a line here and a line there. This is the last line of the last speech the longest serving President in United States history, and certainly one of the greatest ones, ever wrote: "The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with a strong and active faith." (Clinton, 1998, para 25)

In this anecdote, we find the value of speakers working closely with a text, of being actively involved in the speechwriting process. On a similar note, although President Obama was making a joke, he mentioned at a Kennedy Center Honors reception that he had "worked with the speechwriters" to try to compose a "smooth transition from ballet to Led Zeppelin" (Obama, 2012, para 21). The stark contrast is funny, but there is also reference to the importance of transitioning from one idea to another—something consistent with rhetorical work in the organization canon of rhetoric.

Discussion

Besides the acknowledgement that presidents are commenting on speechwriting and speechwriters in their public addresses— something that Compton and Kaylor (2012) found notable about public presidential remarks about public speaking—there are additional implications we might glean from this examination.

1. Speechwriters have not always been publicly acknowledged, so the contemporary mentions of speechwriters examined here offer unique opportunities to talk about the shifting roles of speechwriters in political rhetoric. Consider, for example, speechwriter William Lane's observation more than twenty-five years ago: "A ghost is supposed to be a ghost. As soon as you start sticking your face out, you aren't doing your job" (McClenahen, 1984, p. 32). Public mentions of speechwriters—and even specific speechwriter's names—contrasts this idea of the hidden ghostwriter.

2. When mentioning speechwriters by name, presidents were mostly complimentary, building into relational dimensions of presidents and speechwriters. "In a very real sense," Medhurst (1987) notes, "the most important inventional choice any president ever makes is the decision concerning who shall be entrusted with the invention of presidential discourse. It is a choice not about ideas or arguments, but about people" (p. 242). Praise of specific speechwriters would seem to validate this "most important inventional choice."

3. This review of presidential public address found more criticism of presidential speechwriting offered by presidents in the 1960s and 1970s than from presidents in the 1980s forward. Of course, from this examination of rhetoric, we do not have evidence to make conclusive claims connecting chronology and views of speechwriting, but it is worth further exploring. We might also speculate as to other reasons for the publicly stated differing views on speechwriting. On this note,

Medhurst (1987) points to the value of considering a president's views toward speechmaking. "Is it merely an accident," he asks, "that those exhibiting less involvement in the process are also those on record as expressing disdain for presidential speechmaking and its place in a democracy?" (p. 243). Personality, too, would likely affect a president's comfort with humorous asides about speechwriting and speechwriters.

Conclusions and Future Directions

Scholars have pointed to the value of studying presidential speechwriting (e.g., Medhurst, 1987), and a premise of this essay is that it is informative to look at how presidents view the process of speechwriting, as evidenced by their public claims about speechwriting in their speeches. This examination of comments by Presidents Johnson, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, Clinton, W. Bush, and Obama reveals that presidents have made several comments about speechwriting and speechwriters, with views ranging from complimentary to more critical, with tones ranging from serious to humorous.

Future research should expand the scope to include presidential rhetoric beyond public addresses, including memoirs and public interviews. Researchers could specifically consider if, and if so, how, characterizations of speechwriters and speechwriting differ in these contexts from presidential public address. It would also be interesting to consider issues of image bolstering (P. Benoit, 1997), image repair (W. Benoit, 2014), and/or image prepare (Compton, 2017) in reference to mentions of speechwriters. Might a president give credit to speechwriters in an effort to project modesty? Might a president attempt to shift blame when a speech is not well received? Might some references to speechwriters even function as an inoculation effect, protecting the speaker against criticism (see Compton, 2013), a rhetorical strategy often used in political rhetoric (Compton & Ivanov, 2013)? These questions, and others, warrant further attention.

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Leveraging University Mission Statements: A Case Study Analyzing Competitive Academic Teams' Contributions Toward Advancing Mission Statements

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Abstract: *This case study examines the importance of program alignment with a university's mission and pedagogical commitment to students. Conducting site-specific research that highlights how co-curricular activities such as forensics advance the university's mission empowers programs to engage in a proactive approach to sharing with university administration the unique ways in which they can provide data to fulfill the Higher Learning Commission's (HLC) accreditation requirements, contribute to the overall success of the university, and solidify their own position amongst the institutional community.*

According to Dr. Pat Lynch, the President of Business Alignment Strategies, Inc. (2010), to continue high levels of production and momentum during times of economic downsizing, the phrase regularly adopted is "we simply need to learn to do more with less" (para. 2). Since the 1980s, policy regarding higher education has evolved to reflect Lynch's words, focusing more on economic gain and market model approaches (St. John, Daun-Barnett & Moronski-Chapman, 2013). This ideological shift, along with yearly projected state budget cuts, enrollment variance, and campus funding realignments, greatly influences administrative decisions regarding resource allocation. Many states are funding higher education at a rate lower than during the economic recession in 2008 (Mitchell & Leachman, 2015). As a result, universities are forced to make difficult decisions regarding funding and resource allocation to academic and campus programs. This process is challenging, as creating a matrix to guide budgetary decision-making is an arduous task. However, universities have one frequently overlooked tool that should provide the foundation for creating such a matrix - their mission statement.

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) (2015), requires universities to have a mission statement that ". . . is clear and articulated

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publicly; it guides the institution's operations" (Criterion 1. Mission, para. 1). Further, the HLC advances mission-specific components that must be met to maintain accreditation, such as: "The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission," and "The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission" (Criterion 1. Mission, para. 1A & 1B). Essentially, mission statements should guide and direct the priorities, actions, and resource allocations on the campus, including instruction, campus activities, and extra/co-curricular programs. To attain and maintain accreditation, the university must demonstrate the relationship between the mission statement and campus priorities is met and continues to direct decision-making. The challenge is to provide sufficient and impactful data that demonstrates this interdependent relationship.

Many co-curricular programs such as forensics, face the challenge to provide data justifying the value of activity, especially during times of economic instability. Although a wealth of research exists touting the overarching benefits of forensics participation, there are far less data linking forensics programs to specific university outcomes and mission statements, much to the detriment of our community. Bartanen (2006) explained:

> Forensic programs will be required to explain and justify the benefits of their existence using clear and compelling evidence to both maintain their continued presence and increase the likelihood of funding at a level sufficient for achieving the program's competitive and non-competitive goals in a university environment where marginal schools, departments and programs will be eliminated or de-funded. (p. 33)

If accreditation, funding allocation, and decision-making are all linked to a university's mission statement, it would seem one of the most compelling ways to justify program existence is through proper alignment with the university's mission statement. Bartanen (1998) lamented, "One challenge facing the forensics community then, is to strengthen its connection with campus discussions of pedagogy" (p.12). Therefore, a forensics program's challenge is twofold. First, programs must produce a valid and specific matrix for measuring the team's social and educational value linked directly to the school's mission statement. Second, programs must participate in the process of assessment and evaluation of programmatic goals to ensure pedagogic value remains directly linked to the university's mission. Essentially, data supporting validity and mission statement fulfillment are necessary to highlight the success of the institution, ensure accreditation, and justify program existence (Copeland, Stutzman & Collins, 2015; Walker, 2015).

Purpose of this Study

This case study examines the relationship between co-curricular teams and mission statement fulfillment at The University of Central Missouri (UCM), mid-sized, four-year institution located in Warrensburg, MO. The University's mission statement is to ". . . transform students into lifelong learners, dedicated to service, with the knowledge, skills and confidence to succeed and lead in the region, state, nation and world" (UCM Fact Book, 2017, p. ii). The University advances this mission through the Learning to a Greater Degree contract, an agreement between the school and student body which obligates the school to provide ample opportunities for students to participate in activities that uphold the contract's four pillars of academic success. The contract's four pillars, which include: *engaged learning, future-focused academics, gaining a worldly perspective, and creating a culture of service*, promise "an educational experience that extends beyond the classroom," that will prepare students to "excel in the fast-paced world of today and tomorrow" (UCM Quick Reference Guide, para. 1).

Competitive academic teams such as forensics, DECA, and mock trial would seem to be excellent examples of programs that ". . . extend [educational experiences] beyond the classroom" (UCM Quick Reference Guide, para. 1). However, if said programs cannot provide evidence to support such claims, their connection and value to the greater campus community decreases, which increases their likelihood of being cut in times of economic crisis. This study seeks to illuminate the value added by competitive academic teams to mission statement fulfillment at The University of Central Missouri. Due to the target audience of this journal and space constraints, this article focuses primarily on the relationship between forensics and the UCM mission statement.

Review of Literature

The Role of Student Involvement

Astin's (1984; 1985; 1993; 1999) work on student development theory found students who were highly involved in their education and campus community experienced improved academic standing, had better relationships with instructors, felt a stronger connection to the campus community, and developed several time management and coping traits that advanced personal and academic success. Ting (1997) found similar results while studying contributing factors to academic success in first year college students. Kuh (2009) defined these actions as methods of student engagement, or ". . . the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of colleges and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities" (p. 683). Increased student

engagement and involvement tends to decrease student dropout rates, which benefits both the student population and the university, as degree completion is an essential goal of education and essential to mission statement fulfillment (Bryson, 2016).

One method of involvement Astin (1984; 1985; 1993; 1999) identified in his research is campus organizations, teams, and clubs, often referred to as extra or co-curricular activities. Involvement in co-curricular activities is important to the undergraduate collegiate experience, as it supplies students with increased opportunities for social interactions and relational connections with both peers and faculty (Astin 1984; 1985; 1993; 1999). Many researchers have found these connections as being one of the strongest influencing factor on retention and positive educational outcomes (Burris, Ashorn, Akers, Fraze, Brashears & McCulloch, 2010; Kuh & Hu, 1999; O'Keeffe, 2013). Participation in organizations inadvertently teaches life skills, as involvement requires a level of commitment and dedication that serves the student well in their academic career (Astin, 1984; 1985; 1993; 1999). Chebator (1995) supported these claims, finding students who were involved in co-curricular activities had higher grade point averages and retention rates, more self-confidence, and increased emotional stability over their uninvolved peers. In summary, several researchers, including Astin (1985, 1993), Holland and Huba (1991), Pascarella, Ethington, and Smart (1986), Pascarella and Smart (1991), and Ryan (1989) reported students involved in co-curricular programs were more successful, and satisfied with their overall collegiate experience. Simply stated, it would seem the relationship between a university's fulfillment of its mission statement and its direct link to involvement, student academic success, retention and graduation rates cannot be underemphasized.

Academic Teams as a Means of Involvement

Although most institutions offer several modes of student engagement, not all methods of engagement are rooted in pedagogy and personal growth, hindering their abilities to be uniquely linked to university outcomes. Academic teams claim to teach critical life skills while being naturally aligned with the university's academic curricula. In their study analyzing participation on co-curricular teams, Kosloski and Ritz (2014) found involvement in co-curricular activities such as competitive academic teams allows learners to ". . . take part in many educational activities outside of the classroom that may include community service, leadership, competitive events, and career awareness, all reinforcing the learner's curriculum" (p. 154). For example, Kuyper (2011) found involvement in forensics taught a plethora of interpersonal, and team-oriented skills similar to those identified as outcomes to athletic team participation. Copeland et al. (2015) highlighted how involvement in forensics bolstered civic engagement, connectedness, and critical reflection. Rogers (2002) found: