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THE Forensic OF PI KAPPA DELTA



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NO. 4**

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THE FORENSIC of Pi Kappa Delta

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No. 4

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OVERVIEW OF THE 1997 PKD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

Guest Editor Scott Jensen
Webster University

The 1997 Pi Kappa Delta Professional Developmental Conference provided a forum for scholarship and discussion that will have impacts on the way Pi Kappa Delta and the forensics community approaches our activity. The theme, "Walking the Tightrope: Balancing Mission and Practice in Forensics," reflects our dynamic and evolving laboratory. As our activity fragments into several styles of debate, multiple national organizations and national tournaments for both individual events and debate, and increasing pressures that challenge forensic educators, a re-examination of our mission and practice is worthwhile.

This year's conference attracted 85 participants, including 42 students. The blend of students and professionals is an exciting and increasingly common feature of this event. The bi-annual PKD conference is an excellent forum for students to present their scholarship. As forensic practitioners, their perspective is an essential part of our continuing effort to shape an activity that provides meaningful educational, competitive, social, and cultural experiences to each of its participants.

The 1997 conference included a new addition—short courses. Two programs were offered, with one geared toward helping students transition into collegiate forensics and the other intended as an arena for educators seeking information about directing programs in this day and age of collegiate forensics. Each short course was well attended, with feedback indicating that participants left feeling enriched.

Panels reflected the diversity that defines Pi Kappa Delta's efforts to embrace the breadth of our activity. Issues ranged from reforming the PKD national tournament and convention to discussions of debate formats. Kristine Bartanen delivered a poignant keynote address, "Reclaiming the Citizen-Reporter in the Mission and Practice of Forensic Education," that outlined competition as a vehicle through which the paramount mission of forensics—education—can be fulfilled.

I want to thank each individual who made the professional developmental conference a part of their Pi Kappa Delta convention experience this past March. In particular, I offer my gratitude to each participant who shared ideas through papers, panel discussions, and short course direction. I also thank the chairs and respondents who provided guidance and evaluation to the ideas being expressed. Finally, I offer a note of thanks to Steven Hunt, editor of *The Forensic* for the past four years. Steve's dedication to forensic activities, and its scholarship in particular, has contributed much to our discipline. His patience and guidance with this special issue has helped me in ways I can never express. As this is Steve's last issue of our journal, I commend him for a job well done.

What follows are three revised papers from the 1997 conference. Each was selected after peer review and revisions. These papers reflect important

perspectives on our national tournament, contemporary debate practices, and educator training. Each manuscript serves as an editorial on reforms needed to strengthen aspects of our activity. With Kristine Bartanen's keynote address serving as its preface, this special issue becomes a forum in which we are posed with queries regarding the direction of our activity. This special issue continues a tradition begun in 1995 wherein top papers from the conference are selected for inclusion in an issue of *The Forensic* that highlights each professional developmental conference. While *The Proceedings* will provide a more thorough record of the conference, these articles serve as three examples of the excellence that defined this year's event.

Directing the past two professional developmental conferences has been a rewarding challenge. I have had the opportunity to work with the finest educators and students in our activity. I encourage all readers of this special issue of *The Forensic* to continue their support of the Pi Kappa Delta bi-annual professional developmental conference. Dialogue and scholarship are paramount to the growth of our activity. I look forward to the 1999 conference, to be directed by Glenda Treadaway. More importantly, I look forward to seeing many new faces presenting, listening to, and discussing the issues that are central to the future of our activity. See you in Fargo. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy this special issue of *The Forensic*.

Scott Jensen

Director, 1997 Pi Kappa Delta Professional Developmental Conference
Guest Editor, Special Issue of *The Forensic*

RECLAIMING THE CITIZEN-ORATOR IN THE MISSION AND PRACTICE OF FORENSIC EDUCATION

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Kristine M. Bartanen
University of Puget Sound

Our obligation is to appreciate that when creative minds can join language and thought to the pragmatic arts of statecraft, they can transform the quality of public life. (James Freedman, 1996, p. 117)

The arena is dark. The spotlight illuminates the lone figure who steps tentatively onto the wire, a wire stretched at just the right tension high above the hushed-jostling crowd. Left foot moves ahead of right...right ahead of left, then back in a moment of hesitancy...two quick moves forward...then a stop to adjust the slightly-arched pole grasped firmly in fingers. Eyes focus, of necessity, on the narrow path-wire and see not the faces of fear and awe below.

right foot ahead again of left...readjustment, hesitance...confidence, tentativeness...and so it goes until the last few rushed steps into waiting arms amidst the roar of approval from the again free-breathing spectators below. Her walk is once more completed, the threat of fall pushed back for a few more moments or a few more days.

Your personal vision of the tightrope walk may, of course, differ from mine. Perhaps you see a safety net, or clowns and elephants in nearby circus rings. Perhaps you see a bicycle rather than a pole, or no pole at all. Perhaps your figure is male rather than female. Perhaps the athleticism of the body or the physics of the act capture your attention and admiration. Perhaps, if you've watched any television recently, your vision closes with an American-made automobile and the words: "Wider is better." Whatever your mental picture, is walking the tightrope the metaphor you choose to guide your work as a forensic educator or as a student competitor?

This metaphor is a helpful image for capturing tensions of the forensics activity and for provoking us to good thinking about the betterment of our work; I commend Scott Jensen for his choice of theme and for all of his work in putting together this professional development conference. I also thank Scott and the National Council for the honor of being invited to speak today. It is a somewhat intimidating moment but, like Bob Derryberry's turtle, I hope to invite continued progress by "sticking my neck out" (1994, p. 3). I must take issue with the tightrope-walk image as a guiding metaphor for forensic activities and with the entailed thesis that mission and competition exist in balance, either as the polar opposites on a balancing beam or as the supporting infrastructure between which forensic education path-wire is strung.

To consider how best to balance competition and mission is to treat both entities as objectives or ends, existing in tension with—or outright opposition to—one another. In this view, educational outcomes (which, like most educators, we have not yet done a very good job of measuring) must be weighed against competitive success. Such a weighing, too often, places us in the precarious position of offering hardware as evidence of the "value added" by participation in forensics. Just as course grades are only one piece of evidence in support of a claim that students have accomplished objectives we have set for them in our course syllabi, so competitive success is but one element in the narrative which documents the benefits of forensic education. To consider competition, not as an end to balance against mission, but as a vehicle by which to accomplish mission allows us to ask several important questions: What are the objectives of forensics education for the 21st century? How effectively do existing competitive vehicles serve in accomplishing those objectives? How might our competitive models be improved? Is tournament competition sufficient for accomplishment of desired objectives? Those are, of course, very big questions for a single speech, or even a single conference. They are also questions capable of multiple answers. In the brief time available, however, I invite your consideration of some thoughts about them.

I claim preparation of students for public deliberation as the central purpose of forensic education. This is the traditional mission of our work, expressed in the dual objectives of enhancing students' communication skills and nurturing their potential for leadership. Reclaiming (as an open metaphor) the very ancient rhetorical idea of the citizen-orator on the cusp of a new century pushes us to consider the demands facing students at this moment in history. No doubt several challenges could be identified, but I find

the increasing pluralism of American society to be particularly important for forensic educators and students to consider.

We are well aware of the increasingly pluralistic nature of American society and of our campuses. We know, for example, that the majority of Americans are women, that the proportion of 18-22 years olds who are members of racial or ethnic minority groups will increase from 25% in 1980 to more than 35% by 2000 and rise above 40% by the year 2015 (*Shaping the Future*, 1996, p. 28). We know that on many campuses the 18-22 year old is not the representative student. Carol Schneider, executive vice president of the American Association of Colleges and Universities, asks the critical educational question this way: "What kind of learning helps prepare students to assume responsibility and leadership in a democracy characterized by diversity and marred by persistent and invidious inequalities?" (Foreword to Minnich, 1995, p. vii). Various groups and initiatives in higher education are working to address this question. As I listen to speakers and read literature on this topic, I am struck by the thematic coherence in it: educators are searching for a profoundly rhetorical model. Consider three examples:

Elizabeth Minnich, writing for the American Commitments Initiative National Panel suggests that education "for a democracy still in the making" requires "arts of translation," a set of skills for public deliberation which include "developing respectful comparisons and contrasts, making dialogical connections, risking tentative but responsible judgments, and creating ever-changing syntheses that illuminate and sometimes make it possible to transcend static, polarized oppositions" (1995, p. 25).

A second example of the effort to deal with the challenges of American pluralism is the establishment of the National Commission on Social Culture, and Community at the University of Pennsylvania. This group of forty-eight scholars and writers was convened to combat incivility in American life. In describing the mission of the commission, Pennsylvania's president, Judith Rodin, stated: "Incivility and extremism infect our political culture, polarize the discussion of almost every public issue, and drive successful candidates and their office holders to appease the most extreme of their potential supporters or to retreat from political life" (Guernsey, 1996). A similar conference was sponsored in October by the University of Virginia's "Postmodernity Project" (McMillen, 1996, p. A16).

A third example is Jean Bethke Elshtain's suggestion that the "task of a democratic disposition and [of] democratic institutions [is] to be able to reach disagreement." She invites "not a dream of unanimity or harmony" but an ability to "draw on what we hold in common even as we disagree" (quoted in Hiley, 1996, p. 22).

Understanding self and audience, contextualized knowing, mutually respectful dialogue, full participation, respectful comparisons and contrasts, risking judgments, synthesis, transcending opposition, civil discussion of differences, finding strategies for overcoming polarization and extremism, finding common ground, reaching disagreement...these concepts ought to resonate positively with teachers and students who are committed to an educational activity primarily concerned with using an argumentative perspective in examining problems and communicating with people." As James McBath explained for the Sedalia Developmental Conference, "An argumentative perspective on communication involves the study of reason giving by people as justification for acts, beliefs, attitudes and values. From

this perspective, forensics activities, including debate and individual events, 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" (1974, p. 11). An argumentative perspective emphasizes that communication is not monologue, but is dialogical or even multilogical. Just as citizen-orators were trained in ancient times to "take their place in a human society where all transactions are conducted through the medium of language" (Clark, 1957, p. 58), so contemporary students who are trained in argument respect the humanity of others by treating them as persons rather than as things, assert and reinforce their own humanity, and becomes more humane themselves (Ehninger, 1974, pp. 6-7). That is training for democracy still in the making.

I am confident that you can join me in recalling many moments in forensics education when students are offered opportunities to encounter difference, to understand other cultural perspectives, to consider their point of view in context, to advocate respectfully across opposition, to synthesize and make judgments about information, to reach disagreement. I think of students (especially beginners) traveling from the limited boundaries of their campuses to encounter and enjoy at regional tournaments the perspectives of many other students and coaches. I think especially of the growth of first-time participants in a Pi Kappa Delta National Tournament and convention. I think of scholarly preparation of an oral interpretation presentation and the wonderful potential for broadening human understanding in tournament rounds which contain a variety of cultural voices expressed through in a variety of literary forms. I also think of the potential for learning about fragments of significance in rounds of persuasive speaking, and of the dialogue across difference and the advocacy demands of a good round of academic debate. I think about how educational forensics models teamwork and co-learning. I think, too, of moments specific to the Pi Kappa Delta National Convention, such as the 1995 student caucus on gender-neutral language, where participants struggled with realizations that men and women students in some parts of the nation hold quite different conceptions of the importance of language in constituting equality, worked to construct respectful arguments for and against change, and reflected upon considerations of audience and short-term vs. long-term gains of a persuasive effort. I suspect that most of our recollections about the benefits of forensics education focus on largely on mission, on preparation of students for participation in public deliberation.

Do existing competitive vehicles do all that they could to accomplish the objective of preparing students for democratic leadership in an increasingly pluralistic society? I think we can do better. We need to broaden access to forensics education, break the tyranny of "nationals" norms, and attend to the civility of our tournament practices.

In terms of access, we know that our forensics students remain more male than female, predominantly white, and mostly middle/upper-class. As I have reported in "A Preliminary Assessment of the Professional Climate of Forensics Education," two-thirds of the survey respondents agreed that the forensic community could do more to attract a more diverse range of student participants, a more diverse array of educators, and more diverse judging pool. One respondent observed: "Many of my forensics students cannot participate as extensively as I did. They have families, jobs, other interests, and

schoolwork to occupy their time. ...If we make forensics a great activity for those who can spend 40 hours a week in the library, and travel extensively, we create insurmountable entry barriers for those who cannot." Another offered: "As a largely arcane and esoteric activity, with overt pretenses to elitism, forensics tends to repel the participation of a broad base of students, including especially minority students and women." Several respondents commented about limitations of tournament judging pools. For example: "We barely tolerate diversity in judging philosophies and we structure activities to let students self-select their critics. Is it any wonder that limited tolerance for political diversity and argumentative diversity follows and lack of participatory diversity is not far behind? In the disguise of a skills/intellectual meritocracy, both older coaches and new entrants are banished to obscure rounds or 'extra rounds off.'" If competitive success is our mission, then it is a logical practice to recruit or invite into the activity students with the maximum time and financial resources to devote to tournament preparation, to support most strongly the students with prior training in and/or willingness to conform to winning norms, and to constrain the judging pool as much as possible so as to predict and protect our odds of success. If competition is but a vehicle of educational mission, then I think we would and should make different choices.

One choice is to examine the tyranny of national events on the local tournament. In our efforts to make competitive success more predictable for participants, we have standardized tournaments to the extent that one largely replicates the next with the objective of polishing a narrow range of behaviors in advance of the national presentation. The consequence is that, while one might assume that a community devoted to speech and argumentation would be particularly tolerant of difference, 72% of survey respondents find diversity in communication styles to be discouraged and 66% find diversity of argument to be discouraged in forensic events. "Follow the leader is the name of the game," writes one forensic educator. "Debate and national style competition" writes another, "discourages cultural and stylistic diversity." Illustrations of homogeneity included the three-point "infosuasion", the norm that persuasive speeches must be written to actuate rather than convince, and first-person only prose. "You either do it as a national 'in-crowd' does it or you risk complete censure" summarizes another respondent. I find these comments very troubling. They reveal an activity which looks increasingly inward, rather than a community which seeks to be inclusive of and responsive to America's pluralism. Indeed, it is an interesting irony to consider that, as the opportunities for civic advocacy declined in ancient Greece and Rome, education of citizen-orators became increasingly declamatory and formulaic while, in our own time, when there is such room for and need for rhetorical skills, our tournament laboratory is in many respects a rather rigid progymnastic enterprise. We can do better.

As have other forensic educators, I have argued elsewhere in opposition to incivility in the forensic activity (Bartanen and Hanson, 1994). The heart of the civility issue is not speed of delivery. I disagree with the conclusion offered by David Thomas that it is how debate delivery makes a judge feel that is the key to the disagreement between the "Young Turks" and the "Old Guard" (1993, p. 36). The issue is deeper than that, one expression of which is the following comment by a respondent to the climate assessment survey: "I was told I was not wanted because of my pedagogical emphasis on analysis and