

# **Status of Standards for Tenure and Promotion in Debate**

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Robin Rowland, University of Kansas and R. Jarrod Atchison, Trinity University

## *Members*

Derek Buescher, University of Puget Sound

Ryan Galloway, Samford University

Matt Gerber, Baylor University

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Kelly McDonald, Arizona State University

## *Approved by:*

American Forensic Association

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## **Summary**

At the core of debate is the director who sometimes has the title of “coach.” The director is sometimes described as a competitive strategist, playing much the same role in debate that directors/coaches play in athletics. This view is fundamentally incorrect since the very essence of coaching debate involves two key pedagogical goals common across higher education. The two key pedagogical roles fulfilled by the director/coach are teacher and research team mentor. The director/coach teaches debaters argumentation theory, audience analysis, and a host of other topics. But he/she also teaches them how to research and construct strong arguments. In this way, the director/coach plays a role similar to the leader of a research team. In addition to the pedagogical roles, the director/coach is a mentor, a strategist, a motivator, a planner, an organizer, and often a friend.

Every successful debater has a story about a director/coach who changed his/her life. A successful director/coach can have impact across generations of debaters. In that way, the director/coach also becomes the institutional memory of the activity. Debaters see the competitive demands of the moment, but the director/coach can see how competitive practices impact long term pedagogy. Given the many crucial roles that the director/coach plays in debate, it is essential for the health of the activity that appropriate standards are in place for evaluating the performance of the director/coach and providing the same type of reasonable protection against unfair evaluation that the tenure process provides for other faculty members. Without those standards, directors/coaches may be

evaluated based on standards that do not account for the unique demands involved in coaching academic debate. The result may be to move the activity toward a situation in which more and more of the coaching is done by non academic instructors whose focus is only on competitive success and who lack either a long term perspective or a pedagogical focus.

The Tenure and Promotion Working Group was convened in order to participate in the ongoing national conversations on assessment and promotion and provide guidance to units as to the most appropriate way to appoint and evaluate the performance of professionals in debate and forensics. As we note in detail later in this report, debate directors/coaches currently are evaluated based on a wide variety of different standards and through many different procedures. While there are many models for evaluating the work of coaches, only a few of those models provide the stability that the tenure model provides for faculty members in tenure track positions. This situation is unfortunate. First, current trends in appointment and evaluation encourage the use of non-academic coaches. A tenure model, in contrast, produces a culture dominated by directors/coaches with a focus on long-term pedagogy. Second, it means that directors/coaches lack the protections of other faculty members. As a consequence, in a difficult economic or ideological climate, it may be much easier to get rid of a debate director/coach than other faculty members, a situation that may create instability in the forensics program itself. Third, there is a danger that the incredible time commitment involved in coaching debate may not be rewarded appropriately because the evaluative standards do not account for the pedagogical, professional, and intellectual work of the director in furthering the pedagogical goals of the activity.

To address these difficulties, the tenure and promotion group believes that there are two appropriate models for evaluating the performance of debate coaches. One approach treats the director/coach as a normal tenure-track faculty member, but broadens what can count for academic research. Under this approach, a season of debate should be evaluated as itself a form of research in the same way that a theater production would be considered creative research for a faculty member in a theater department. A few schools already have had the vision to embrace this model. A second approach treats the role of coaching debate as essentially similar to that of faculty who in addition to teaching have a professional performance dimension to their academic assignment. In this way, coaching responsibilities would be evaluated as a kind of professional performance in the same way that the work of a librarian or an academic scientist is viewed as professional performance.

The working group recognizes that when a university grants tenure to an individual, the institution is making a commitment that can extend for twenty-five or more years. Some universities may be wary of making such a commitment to a debate director/coach, fearing that the director/coach will not continue to work with debate over the long term and instead focus on teaching, administration or research. The working group believes that institutions can confront this situation by specifying the responsibilities of the director/coach. For example, some institutions may want to create a title and position description for debate that specifies the duties of the debate director/coach and makes

clear that any grant of tenure applies in the context of the particular position description. The director/coach would be able to earn tenure with all the rights and privileges associated with it and could be promoted to Professor under this approach. Transfer to an alternative tenure line would require review by appropriate administrators as is common with many university appointments such as with department chairs, directors of graduate studies, and basic course directors. The university might give the director/coach a particular title to make this point clear, in the same way that some universities have a different title for a clinical professor than for other faculty members.

A proposed “Standards for Evaluating the Performance of Faculty Debate Coaches,” is included at the end of this document. This document was approved by the attendees at the Developmental Conference on Debate at Wake Forest developmental conference and also by the Board of Trustees of the National Debate Tournament at the same conference. Since the conference, it has been approved by the National Debate Tournament (NDT) committee, the American Forensic Association, the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) and the Western States Communication Association. Based on the endorsement of debate organizations, the standards should be considered by deans and department chairs in crafting the appointment and evaluation standards for future generations of coaches. The standards also may lead to a shift back toward directors/coaches having the protections of tenure, a development that would both provide stability to the coaching ranks and also help maintain a pedagogical focus in the activity.

While our focus has been on debate coaches, we think it quite likely that a very similar situation applies to directors/coaches working with forensics and that the same standards that we are proposing for debate would be appropriate in that context as well.

Debate scholarship embraces a wide array of topics, research methods, and modes of presentation and publication. Although we consider this diversity of scholarly practice a great strength of our field, it brings with it potential difficulties as well. Notable among these is the complexity of assessing records of scholarship that include elements not easily captured by the typical categories used in tenure, promotion, and merit review.

Although this paper is meant to provide guidelines to assist institutions in the creation of tenure and promotion related documents we recognize, of course, that each case of professional assessment is an internal matter of departments, colleges, and universities with their own evaluative standards. Directors/coaches expect to be assessed with the same rigor as their colleagues in other fields. We do not presume this document will supersede procedures at individual institutions. Rather, it offers a perspective on the value of scholarly practices that, though distinctive to debate research, may not be as familiar to scholars and reviewers in other fields. Additionally, the guidelines do not offer an exhaustive account of the many roles fulfilled by the director/coach in debate.<sup>1</sup>

In what follows, we first provide an overview of debate in order to explain the importance of the activity and then review the status of tenure and evaluation standards among directors/coaches in various types of programs across the country. A mass email

was used to ask directors/coaches to submit information about the nature of their current appointment (tenure track, term appointment, and so forth) and the standards through which their performance is evaluated. In addition to seeking information about appointment and evaluation standards for current coaches, we reviewed material from previous developmental conferences and the statement of debate coaches labeled the Quail Roost document (named after the place where the conference was held), as well as information about how faculty in theater and academic professionals in positions similar to that of a debate director/coach are evaluated. Following the review of current appointment and evaluation practices, we develop a case for the proposed two tracks for evaluating the performance of debate coaches. We conclude with draft standards.

### **An Overview of Debate**

The fundamental goal of academic debate in all its forms is to provide students with the critical analysis and advocacy skills they need to build a strong case for a position related to a public controversy. Debate accomplishes this goal through a process in which students prepare for and then attend tournaments on a stated topic. The students, usually in teams of two, research all aspects of the topic, along with underlying issues relevant to the topic, and then prepare positions in order to support and oppose the topic.

The topic is usually a broad statement of policy (or value implying policy) that potentially can be supported or opposed in many different ways. To be successful therefore, debaters must have strong positions related to all of these different ways of supporting or opposing the topic. While the focus of debaters is often on competitive success, that emphasis on competition pushes them to hone their research, critical thinking, argument construction, and presentation skills. The competitive aims of the activity are tied directly to the pedagogical goal of training students to present strong and ethical positions on a public issue. In this way, tournaments are best understood as a kind of advanced laboratory for teaching public argument. Debate provides a laboratory not only for teaching argument, but also for testing the value of various proposals on a given topic. It is thus both a place for training future policy makers and also a place for testing policy proposals. From the perspective of the debater, competitive success may be the primary goal of participation. From the perspective of the director/coach, however, the desire of debaters for competitive success is a powerful prod pushing them to fulfill the pedagogical functions of the activity.

Over the course of a debate season, a team (or individual debater) might compete in as many as a dozen tournaments, comprised usually of six or eight preliminary rounds, followed by a single elimination tournament of teams seeded based on the preliminary results. The process of tournament debate pushes students to do enormous amounts of research and other preparation for tournament competition. The process also forces students to continuously work to strengthen positions on the topic because opposing teams are researching counter-arguments to the positions they have developed. Once again, competition serves a pedagogical function.

It should be evident that while debate is often compared to other competitive activities, especially athletics, it is fundamentally different from those activities. In athletics, the fundamental goal of the competition is the competition itself. In debate, in contrast, the competitive aspects of the activity are a means to a pedagogical end. Debaters are motivated by the competition to do an enormous amount of work researching and preparing arguments, work that they would never do in the same quantity or with the same intensity without the competitive motivation.

Why do universities invest in academic debate? The answer is that the power of tournament debate for training students in public argument and advocacy has been demonstrated over almost 100 years. Many academic programs use simulations of various kinds to train students to confront a given issue. For example, both within and outside universities, crisis simulations are common for preparing professionals for a crisis in public health, foreign policy, and so forth. The simulation serves as an educational laboratory to prepare the students on the topic. Debate is best understood as a more general type of educational laboratory, a laboratory that gives students the basic skills they need in order to develop and defend a persuasive and ethical case related to an important public issue.

### **A Review of Tenure and Evaluation Standards and Appointment Status in Contemporary Debate**

We received twenty nine institutional responses to our query concerning the status of tenure and evaluation standards for debate coaches. Ten of the responses involved institutions with non-tenure track appointments while the remaining nineteen responses included at least one tenure track appointment. Several institutions reported a mixture of tenure track and non-tenure track appointments. In total, the responses represent a wide variety of institutions with one single common denominator—they employ at least one full time debate director/coach.

After analyzing the responses, three items for consideration emerged. First, there is little uniformity concerning the categorization of debate coaching activities. Second, there is a wide continuum between institutions that require debate directors/coaches to achieve the same publication record as their traditional faculty colleagues and institutions that do not have any requirements for scholarship from their debate coaches. Third, there are alternative models for evaluating debate as a creative research activity that may help resolve the institutional pressures for increased scholarly production.

Although total uniformity across institutions is impossible, it is our opinion that these items demonstrate that the status of debate directors/coaches across the academy varies so widely from institution to institution that it is difficult to train, prepare, and evaluate current and future generations of debate coaches. It is not surprising, therefore, that none of the responses included an active debate director/coach with the rank of full professor with tenure, and that our anecdotal evidence suggests that few debate directors/coaches have been promoted to full professor in the modern era.

***Item One: How do institutions account for debate coaching activities?***

Categorizing debate coaching activities as scholarship, teaching, and/or service represents a major discrepancy between institutional approaches to evaluating debate coaches. Although there is a persuasive argument that debate coaching activities intersect all three of these traditional categories, few institutions permit debate directors/coaches to submit their activities within all three categories. Instead, with a few notable exceptions, institutions have generally moved towards treating debate coaching activities as either teaching or service.

The majority of institutions surveyed consider debate coaching as primarily a teaching related activity. As such, most institutions offer course reductions to allow their debate directors/coaches more time to focus on their debate obligations. The number of reductions changes from institution to institution, but the use of course reductions is consistent across a broad range of institutions. Beyond course reductions, however, the standards for evaluating debate coaching activities as teaching vary widely.

One struggle that debate directors/coaches consistently confront is how to articulate teaching *effectiveness* outside of competitive success. One director/coach resents the connection between teaching effectiveness and competitive success because despite how effectively a debate director/coach teaches his/her students, “Student talent is still an extremely important intervening variable.” The responses demonstrate that traditional measures of teaching effectiveness such as student evaluations are rare for a director’s/coach’s debate related activities. We suspect that few of these traditional student evaluation measures would be appropriate for determining the teaching effectiveness of a debate director/coach. As a result, rather than focusing on measures for effectiveness, institutions are increasingly developing descriptions of the connections between debate coaching activities and the educational benefits associated with participation in intercollegiate debate.

Despite the fact that there is a trend towards considering debate coaching as teaching, there is very little consensus on the level of specificity necessary to establish the connection between coaching and the educational benefits of debate. Some institutions have very specific lists of debate related activities such as, “Directing undergraduate research projects,” while other institutions have general statements such as, “Extracurricular student guidance, such as faculty advisor for the undergraduate student organization.” As a result of the vague nature of some descriptions, debate directors/coaches sometimes find themselves explaining the basic connections between their debate coaching activities and teaching while other directors/coaches have the luxury of focusing on explaining their success within specific categories already recognized by the department.

Although the majority of institutions categorize debate coaching activities as teaching, there are several institutions that consider these activities as solely service related. A research one institution’s tenure and promotion document categorizes debate coaching activities under the service section with a list of other activities such as, “Advising

student groups.” The director/coach of this institution described his/her institutional categorization of debate as follows, “Debate vaguely counts under ‘service’.” This categorization of debate is not limited to research one institutions. A small private university explicitly evaluates debate coaching as only service. The tenure and promotion document prioritizes teaching as 50% of the evaluation with research and service split at 25% each. The director/coach of this institution wrote, “I teach the same number of courses as the other faculty, have the same research expectations, the same number of advisees and committees, and other university service and then I do debate on top of that.”

We acknowledge that every academic institution has unique goals and approaches to its academic culture. The result of the current categorization scheme, however, is that different universities end up describing the same exact coaching activity as either teaching or service, but not both. For example, some institutions consider judging at intercollegiate debate tournaments a unique area for instruction. According to one institution, “The faculty member is asked to critically engage the ideas and performance of student competitors, then to render a decision and provide an oral as well as written critique of the event to the students involved. These activities are recognized and rewarded as teaching activities.” A separate institution, however, evaluates judging as second level service when the debate director/coach presents an “oral debate critique before an audience.” Judging debates is a prime example of an activity that can persuasively be articulated as both teaching and service. However, when institutions only evaluate debate coaching activities as either service or teaching it forces similarly situated activities to be relegated to one portion of a debate directors/coaches consideration evaluation.

Institutions differ between categorizing debate coaching as teaching and/or service, but one consistent paradigm throughout the responses is that coaching debate is not considered a “traditional” scholarly activity. None of the responses included a standard of evaluation wherein debate coaching activities are considered the equivalent of publishing peer reviewed articles or a book published by an academic press. As we will review in items two and three, the relationship between coaching debate and scholarship is complicated by alternative models of evaluation, but none of the responses support an evaluation of debate activities as traditional scholarship.

### ***Item Two: Expectations for scholarship***

The second item that emerges from the responses is that the expectations for debate directors/coaches to produce scholarship exist on a wide continuum. On one end of the spectrum, debate directors/coaches are expected to achieve the same publication record as their traditional faculty colleagues. Five of the nineteen institutions with tenure track debate directors/coaches have the same publication expectations for their debate directors/coaches as their traditional faculty. The responses represent a variety of institutions ranging from a Carnegie research one university that requires two publications in journals of “high quality” per year to private institutions that require ten publications in peer-reviewed departmentally approved journals. The tenure and

promotion documents for these departments do not distinguish between debate directors/coaches and traditional faculty with regard to research.

Almost all of the debate directors/coaches at this end of the spectrum cited an institutional philosophy that debate directors/coaches should be treated the same as the other faculty with regard to publication expectations. One director/coach wrote, “The publication requirement is the same as anyone else in the department—no special privilege for debate.” Another director/coach noted, “...despite the fact that 45% of my job is assigned service with the debate program, there is not much weight assigned to debate once you get out of our department...we are expected to publish ‘or perish’ as it has been put.” In addition to having the same publication expectations, these institutions do not count scholarship on the practice of debate at the same level as traditional academic research unless it is published in one of the top journals as designated by the department. In short, this end of the spectrum does not recognize debate as a scholarly activity, creative or otherwise.

On the other end of the spectrum, institutions do not require their debate directors/coaches to engage in any scholarship. There were over twenty five debate directors/coaches represented at this end of the spectrum and all of them were non-tenure track appointments. The positions ranged from directors with the full privileges of a tenured professor except with periodic reviews to one year adjunct appointments. The majority of these debate directors/coaches have reduced teaching obligations and are evaluated on their debate related activities and their classroom teaching effectiveness. Several of these positions are located outside of an academic department and therefore the debate director/coach is evaluated by a university administrator. Within this end of the spectrum, there are a wide variety of institutions from research one universities with multiple directors/coaches to small private teaching colleges with one director/coach. The one common characteristic is that none of these institutions require their debate directors/coaches to engage in scholarly activity.

While the overall publication expectations vary from institution to institution, there are fewer and fewer debate directors/coaches today who fall somewhere in the middle. In the middle, debate directors/coaches are expected to publish some traditional academic research, but not as much as their traditional faculty peers. Only three institutions have explicit middle ground standards for scholarly research. Two of the three institutions had vague language suggesting that the debate director/coach should demonstrate a consistent record of publication, but acknowledged that the unique demands associated with the position require the institution to evaluate a candidate’s overall contribution. The most explicit middle ground standard was set by a research one institution. At this institution, the research requirements for a traditional faculty member require a candidate to either publish two peer-reviewed articles for each probationary year or publish an academic book and five peer-reviewed articles. This institution, however, has a separate description for the debate director/coach which requires that person to publish at least five peer-reviewed articles during his/her probationary period. Despite the attempt of these three institutions to carve out a middle ground, the overall responses suggest that unless an institution adopts an alternative model for evaluating debate coaching activities the trend



is decidedly in the direction of more publications and less distinction between debate directors/coaches and traditional faculty or towards hiring non-tenure track debate directors/coaches with no expectations for scholarship. In the latter situation, directors/coaches lack the protection and status afforded by tenure.

### ***Item Three: Alternative Models for Evaluating Debate Coaches***

Four of the institutions surveyed utilized alternative models for evaluating the activities of their debate coaches. The four institutions represent a large research one institution, two mid-size state universities, and one small private university. All of the institutions have tenure-track debate coaches. Despite the diversity of institutions, the one characteristic they share is that they evaluate debate coaching activities as a form of scholarship. One institution's tenure and promotion document is adapted from the *Quail Roost Conference* report and acknowledges that "Within the Department of Communication, the Director of Forensics is a unique position with unique evaluation requirements." The document goes on to describe how the responsibility to be well versed in the relevant literature on the debate resolution permeates all parts of being an active debate director/coach including directing undergraduate research projects, judging intercollegiate debates, and effectively preparing students for competition. The debate director/coach submits these materials in an annual portfolio that is considered a form of research for their tenure and promotion materials.

Two of the institutions borrow their model directly from the performing arts and theater in particular. The tenure and promotion document from one of these institutions identifies "Direction of forensic activities" under the category "Scholarship and Other Creative Activities." The document outlines the standard as follows, "Creating and managing a nationally competitive forensics program and providing leadership at the national level in competition debate are the primary indices of achievement in this category." In this model, the debate director/coach submits a portfolio describing how his/her activities satisfy this standard, and external reviewers evaluate the candidate's success. The other institution utilizes a "career variable interest agreement" that counts debate as a professional activity that is modeled after the standards used to judge the professional activity of theater professionals. These alternative models suggest that a deeper understanding of debate coaching as a form of scholarship can help resolve the tension between requiring scholarship for tenure and promotion or moving the debate coaching position to a non-tenure track appointment.

### **Is a Tenure Model Appropriate for Academic Debate?**

The focus on the competitive nature of academic debate along with analogies often drawn in the media between debate and intercollegiate athletics might lead some to argue that the tenure model is not appropriate for a debate director/coach. While the working group recognizes that the tenure model will not fit all institutions, we also believe that it is the most appropriate model for maximizing the value of debate as a means of training future leaders and producing research on argumentation. A tenure model is appropriate for a debate director/coach for the same reasons that it is appropriate for other faculty

members. The tenure model both provides appropriate protections for the director/coach and ensures that the director/coach will be viewed as a valuable faculty colleague within an institution and not as a second class citizen. The director/coach has a great deal to offer his/her colleagues in terms of depth of knowledge of public policy, and an understanding of effective management of a research team, for that is what a debate squad is. This expertise may be lost to the department and larger institution if the director/coach is not viewed as normal faculty member. Directors/coaches lacking a tenure-track appointment are often denied the opportunity to participate on faculty or graduate student committees. Not only do such rules unfairly harm the career of the director/coach, but they deny to the institution the many insights about argumentation and public policy that a director/coach can provide.

In addition, the tenure model is needed to protect and nurture academic debate as a subfield in argumentation studies. While academic debate is a highly competitive activity, from a pedagogical perspective it is best viewed as an extremely intense form of leadership coaching in order to train the next generation of leaders in a host of fields related to the public sphere. A tenure model is widely seen as appropriate for faculty teaching and doing research in all areas of the curriculum. Precisely the same point applies to debate. The presence of tenured faculty in any sub-field guarantees a focus on pedagogy and research. In debate, tenured faculty members provide both institutional memory and a focus on the larger educational purposes of the activity.

## **Two Models for Appointment and Evaluation of Debate Coaches**

The review of appointment status and evaluation standards of debate directors/coaches indicates that there are many different models for appointment and evaluation of debate coaches. However, only a few of those models provide the stability and protection of a tenure track appointment *and* account for the unique demands of coaching debate. Debate directors/coaches have responsibilities and demands on their time that are very different from other faculty members. An appropriate model for appointment and evaluation of debate directors/coaches needs to take into account those responsibilities and demands.

Coaching debate is a form of teaching, but the time demands are much greater than for traditional classroom teaching. Consider the example of a director/coach with a squad of five teams that travel actively and three more that participate occasionally. In order to prepare these teams for tournament travel, a director/coach would have to spend many hours and several evenings a week working with the teams on arguments and listening to practice debates. A team of this size would need to travel to eight or more tournaments a semester in order to provide each of the active teams with adequate competition. Even if the director/coach of the team had help in some form, he/she would need to go to at least eight tournaments and more likely ten or more a year. Each tournament requires a four or five day commitment, including travel days. The time demands we have described are typical for debate coaches. Many directors/coaches spend even more time than in the typical example we have described. There are similar time demands for forms of debate that are focused on individual, rather than team competition.

Of course, directors/coaches do far more than simply prepare teams for travel and attend tournaments. Directors/coaches also recruit high quality students to their college or university, engage in a variety of alumni related and other outreach activities, host public debates, do public relations for the program and university, along with many other activities.

Why do directors/coaches spend so much time working with debaters? Another way of considering this point is to ask why such an incredible time commitment is justified in an academic sense? The short answer to this question is that the debaters of today are the academic, business, legal, and political leaders of tomorrow. As is demonstrated in the reports of other working groups, academic debate has served as an excellent training ground for people who go on to shape society. Debate teaches people the research, critical thinking, and advocacy skills they need to deal with problems in the public sphere and elsewhere. Student newspapers often compare the work of the debate director/coach to the work of a football or basketball director/coach. In terms of the time commitment, this comparison is exactly on target. In terms of the impact of the director/coach, however, the comparison is deeply misleading. A successful basketball director/coach trains the next NBA point guard or power forward. It is no exaggeration to say that a successful debate director/coach might train a Senator, Supreme Court Justice, or President. Former debaters are widely represented in professions related to public argument including the law, academia, business, politics and governments. And the debate director/coach accomplishes the aim of training these future leaders without the support system found in athletics by putting in very long hours working with gifted students. A number of studies of higher education recently have emphasized a coaching model. Academic debate is perhaps the strongest and most successful example of a discipline using that model.

The key point is that appointment and evaluation standards need to take into account the time demands of the director/coach and the importance of the work that the director/coach is doing. There are two basic problems that are present in the current appointment and evaluation models. First, many directors/coaches are evaluated based on standards that do not account for the unique demands of coaching debate. For example, the time demands on directors/coaches mean that they have far less time to work on traditional academic research than do normal tenure track faculty members in research appointments. It is unsurprising that debate directors/coaches have not produced as much traditional research as other faculty members, given the time demands we have described. This means that applying traditional research standards to debate directors/coaches is in nearly all cases inappropriate. A similar problem occurs in cases where the program attempts to account for the work demands of coaching debate by providing a course release from teaching or other small benefit. While helpful, the demands of coaching a season of debate cannot be balanced by the provision of a small benefit, such as a course release.

Moreover, the application of traditional standards for research to debate is inappropriate because it does not recognize as legitimate the unique forms of research that are produced

by debate. Debate directors/coaches assist their debaters in developing innovative arguments on a given topic. The debaters then test those arguments rigorously in competition against teams in the region or throughout the nation. This testing process is a form of peer review, quite similar to that which occurs at journals. The ideas produced in this competitive process *are* a form of research. In the arts, it is widely recognized that projects produced in collaboration by a faculty member and a student are a form of creative activity. Similarly, the arguments produced by the collaboration of directors/coaches and debaters are best understood as creative research. Applying traditional standards of research to debate directors/coaches is fundamentally unfair because it fails to recognize the work of the director/coach along with his/her students in producing creative research.

In order to validate the creative research produced by the collaboration of directors/coaches and debaters, the working group recommends that in conjunction with the American Forensic Association, debate organizations create an on-line journal focused on best practices in creative public policy research. In addition to providing an outlet for best practices in debate argumentation, the journal also might publish policy analyses about contemporary policy controversies drawn from debate research. The editorial board of the journal would review samples of creative research submitted on a given topic and then publish on-line those examples of creative research meeting the standards of the journal. The focus of the on-line journal would be on best practices in creative research related to the particular debate topic and thus would not compete with the mission of existing journals, such as *Argumentation and Advocacy*. However, the existence of the on-line journal could validate the importance of the creative research produced in the collaboration of directors/coaches and debaters. The on-line journal also might be a way for the debate community to participate in the dialogue about public policy in the public sphere.

The second problem is that in attempting to account for the time demands on debate coaches, many institutions have created non-traditional academic appointments for debate coaches. These appointments do account for the demands of the activity, but often lack the protections provided to tenure-track or term appointment faculty members. This situation threatens the stability of coaching. In a difficult economic time, a debate director/coach may be let go simply because he/she lacks the protection of tenure. Also, debate directors/coaches are much more subject to the vagaries of shifting academic ideologies than are faculty members with tenure-track appointments. Another unfortunate effect of present standards is to encourage institutions to hire non-academic coaches, usually a recent former debater, to direct a program. This coaching arrangement may produce an activity in which the focus is almost exclusively on competition as opposed to pedagogy. It also means that directors/coaches rarely have a long term perspective.

It seems clear that the solution to the problems we have identified is to create appointment and evaluation models that both account for the unique demands of coaching debate and also provide appropriate academic protections for coaches. Our goal in this report is to provide clear, equitable, reasonable, and attainable standards for annual

performance evaluation and promotion. While recognizing that institutions may take many approaches to appointment and evaluation standards for a debate director/coach, the working group believes that there are two possible models for establishing standards that are clear, equitable, reasonable, and attainable that merit particular attention.

***Model One—A Professional Performance Model***

Under the professional performance model, a debate director/coach would be appointed and evaluated in the same way that professionals with teaching, but not research responsibilities, are appointed and evaluated. In this view, a debate director/coach would be evaluated based on his/her professional accomplishments in coaching debate, along with normal teaching and service responsibilities. The professional accomplishments in debate would be assessed through a professional responsibility portfolio that might include one or more of the following:

- A summary of team-building and other coaching efforts carried out by the director/coach;
- A summary of team performance at tournaments in the review period;
- A sample of research briefs created during the debate season. This material might be published in the on-line journal on best practices in debate argumentation;
- A summary of the director/coach's work as a judge in debate and how this judging functioned as a means of carrying on an academic dialogue concerning research relevant to the debate resolution;
- Information about public debates and other events in which the debate squad participated;
- A summary of pedagogical efforts training coaches and future directors of debate;
- A summary of efforts to secure external funding for research, programming, and/or outreach and development programs, e.g. Urban Debate Leagues (UDLS);
- A summary of alumni development and other outreach efforts;
- Traditional academic research in argumentation and debate in journals such as *Argumentation and Advocacy*, *Contemporary Argumentation and Debate*, and *Argumentation* or the proceedings from argumentation conferences such as Alta, ISSA and OSSA, outlets that have played a key role in the development of argumentation and debate/forensics theory and practice (note, that such research is not a required part of the appointment);
- Other appropriate information bearing on the professional performance of the director/coach.

The professional responsibility model recognizes that the demands of coaching make it difficult or impossible for a debate director/coach to fulfill the research mission of other tenure-track faculty members. Rather, the position should be evaluated in the same way that a Clinical Professor or other professional, with teaching responsibilities is evaluated.

For example, the Basic Course Director at a number of universities is evaluated under a model in which professional performance takes the place of research in the evaluation scheme. Similarly, a clinical professor managing something like a clinic or laboratory would be evaluated based on their work in the clinic or laboratory, as well as their teaching, and not based on publications. Some universities may want to give the debate coach a particular title analogous to clinical professor in order to account for the nature of the position.

The professional responsibility model provides an appropriate way of accounting for the massive time commitment associated with as well as the pedagogical importance of coaching debate. Under this approach, a debate director/coach could be placed in a tenure-track faculty line with all the rights and privileges thereof, but evaluated under the professional responsibility model. The director/coach could be tenured in this position and post-tenure remain in it continuing to fill the position as director/coach. Alternatively, the professional responsibility model could be used for renewable term appointments of three or five years. The tenure-track model is preferable because it provides greater stability.

The professional responsibility model accounts for the substantial commitment that acting as a debate director/coach requires and provides an appropriate means of specifying the appointment assumptions and evaluating the performance of a coach.

***Model Two—Debate Performance as a Form of Research in a Tenure-Track Model***

While the professional responsibility model is an appropriate means of evaluating the performance of a debate coach, the working group believes that the Debate Performance model is preferable. Under this approach, a season of debate would be viewed as itself a form of research in the same way that directing a theatrical production is viewed as a form of creative performance in theater. This model accounts for the enormous demands of debate and also recognizes that academic debate is itself an enormously research-intensive activity. In the course of a debate season, the arguments produced under the direction of any director/coach reach literally hundreds of debaters, judges, and other coaches. In that way, the ideas are presented and tested in a public setting at least as rigorous as the peer-review process for academic publication. The Debate Performance model is the most appropriate model for appointment and evaluation of a debate director/coach at any university with a strong research mission. At such institutions, there is every danger that a faculty member on a non-research appointment may be viewed as a second class citizen. Recognizing that debate performance is itself a form of research provides a means of fairly evaluating the work of a director/coach and minimizing the danger that the director/coach will be viewed as academically inferior to other research faculty. Under this approach, a debate director/coach would be evaluated based on his/her research performance in debate, along with normal teaching and service responsibilities.

The Debate Performance model requires a means of assessing the research dimension in a season of debate in a way similar to that which is used in theater to assess the creative

performance value in a theatrical production (examples of such standards are included as an appendix to this document). A similar approach is sometimes used in journalism and other disciplines. Drawing on the experience in theater and other academic disciplines, debate directors/coaches could be evaluated based on one or more of the following:

- A portfolio of research materials including research briefs representing a broad sample of the team's research efforts over the course of the debate season. This material might be published in the on-line journal on best practices in debate argumentation;
- A summary of the director/coach's work as a judge in debate and how this judging functioned as a means of carrying on an academic dialogue concerning research relevant to the debate resolution;
- A two-page statement explaining the intellectual importance of the research produced over the course of the season;
- A summary of pedagogical efforts training coaches and future directors of debate;
- A summary of efforts to secure external funding for research, programming, and/or outreach and development programs, e.g. Urban Debate Leagues (UDLS);
- Peer review statements on the research performance of the team by debate critics certified for their excellence in argument by the National Debate Tournament, the Cross Examination Debate Association, and other appropriate debate organizations, operating under the general sponsorship of the American Forensic Association, the leading professional organization in argumentation studies. In theater, peer reviewers are certified by leading organizations and their views are consulted on the quality of theatrical productions. A similar process would work well in debate and be much easier to organize because of the tournament focused nature of the activity. The standards needed to be classified as a peer critic would be validated by debate organizations and the American Forensic Association;
- Traditional academic research, including research focused on pedagogical issues in argumentation and debate in journals such as *Argumentation and Advocacy*, *Contemporary Argumentation and Debate*, and *Argumentation* or proceedings from argumentation conferences such as Alta, ISSA and OSSA, outlets that have played a key role in the development of argumentation and debate/forensics theory and practice (note, that such research is not a required part of the appointment); (note, that such research is not a required part of the appointment);
- Other appropriate information bearing on the professional performance of the coach.

The Debate Performance model provides an appropriate model for appointing and evaluating the academic performance of debate coaches. It recognizes the immense demands placed on directors/coaches and provides a means of evaluating that performance that does not risk labeling the director/coach as a non-research and therefore lesser faculty member. Rather, it recognizes that a season of debate involves just as strong and rigorous a commitment to academic research as does participation in the peer review publication process. Under this approach, a debate director/coach could be placed in a tenure-track faculty line with all the rights and privileges thereof, but evaluated under

the debate performance model. The director/coach could be tenured in this position and post-tenure remain in it continuing to fill the position as director/coach.

In relation to the Debate Performance model, the working group urges relevant debate and forensics organizations to study the most appropriate means of certifying peer reviewers. In addition to conducting reviews of tenure and promotion materials, these reviewers might be used in some cases as part of the annual evaluation or third-year review process. It is important that debate and forensics organizations establish rigorous standards for validating status as a peer reviewer in order to guarantee that reviews produced by the peer reviewers receive the careful consideration that they deserve.

### **Appointment Expectations**

In order to clearly establish appointment expectations, it is important that letters of appointment specify the responsibilities of the director/coach and the criteria under which his/her performance will be evaluated both in terms of the annual merit process and in terms of promotion and tenure. The letter of appointment should articulate the relationship of the director/coach and the debate/forensics program to the mission of the program, department, college, and university.

### **Promotion to Professor**

In addition to providing a model for promotion to Associate Professor with tenure, it is important to provide an appointment model and associated standards for promotion to Professor. Provision of a model under which distinguished debate directors/coaches can be promoted to Professor is important for two reasons. First, the promotion to Professor is a sign of substantial professional accomplishment. Without that alternative, even the most distinguished director/coach may be considered a second class citizen in the department. Second, because attaining the rank of Professor takes both time and considerable professional accomplishment, directors/coaches who attain this rank will have long experience with the activity. These directors/coaches play a crucial role in providing institutional memory within the activity and maintaining a focus on pedagogy.

Each of the models for appointment and evaluation that were described earlier could be used to set standards for promotion to Professor. The faculty member would again use the portfolio process, but with the aim of demonstrating that he/she was a major intellectual leader in the activity, as defined by the criteria for evaluating the portfolio under either the professional performance or the debate performance models.

### **Merit Evaluation**

As we noted in a review of the current status of appointment and evaluation standards in debate, many directors/coaches currently are on non-academic appointments. This method of appointment lacks the stability of the tenure track model and deprives both debate as a subfield and also particular academic institutions of the insights that the director/coach can provide on a host of academic issues related to public policy, value argument, argumentation, and means of managing a research group. Therefore, while we believe the tenure model is the most appropriate approach for appointing and evaluating



debate coaches, we also believe that regardless of the model it is essential for directors/coaches to be evaluated through the same merit evaluation process as other faculty members, although by criteria appropriate for the director/coach as outlined in this document, and to have access to the same kinds of rewards as other faculty members.

### **Transfer to Alternative Evaluation Appointments**

It is important to recognize that the appointment and evaluation standards apply only to cases where faculty members remain actively involved in debate. Meeting the standards for appointment and promotion under either the professional performance or the research performance models would not necessarily qualify the individual to shift his/her appointment to a traditional research oriented appointment. Since the individual would not have been tenured under a research model, his/her accomplishments would not necessarily qualify him/her for such an appointment. This approach has two advantages. First, it encourages debate directors/coaches to remain in the activity by providing them a path for promotion first to Associate Professor with tenure and then Professor. This should help keep senior directors/coaches involved in debate. Second, it answers the fear of some that debate directors/coaches will be tenured under a non research model and then retire from debate to the department and become unproductive. This would not be possible because the appointment of the director/coach should specify not only their assignment to debate, but also that their promotion and tenure were accepted under a non-research model. Thus, the faculty member could transfer out of debate into a traditional tenure track faculty line only with the approval of relevant promotion and tenure decision makers at a given school.

### **Conclusion**

The Working Group on Tenure and Promotion Standards believes that current appointment and evaluation standards in many cases do not account for the unique demands of coaching debate and fail to provide the stability of the tenure track model. Current practices also encourage programs to move to a model in which the director/coach is a non-academic and the focus of the program is purely on competition. The working group believes that this trend is unfortunate and that alternative standards are needed. In this report we have developed a case for two models for appointment and evaluation. In the final section, we include draft language that we hope will be endorsed by various organizations associated with academic debate.

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## **Appendix: Standards for Appointment and Evaluation of Debate Coaches**

Preamble—The pedagogical value of debate for training the next generation of leaders in business, academia, the law, and the public sphere is well known. Debaters of today often become the successful lawyer, academic, business leader or even Senator, Supreme Court Justice, or President of tomorrow. Given the pedagogical value of debate, it is important to have appointment and evaluation standards that account for the unique demands of tournament debate. The time demands of working intensively with a group of gifted students to prepare them for tournament competition against other gifted students are enormous. Appointment and evaluation standards must account for both those demands.

It is in recognition of both the importance of the director/coach and the need for appointment and evaluation standards that account for the nature of debate, that \_\_\_\_\_ endorses the following standards:

### ***Model One—A Professional Performance Model***

Under the professional performance model, a debate director/coach is appointed and evaluated in the same way that professionals with teaching, but not research responsibilities, are appointed and evaluated. Professional performance replaces research in the appointment and evaluation standards applied to the coach. Professional accomplishments in debate should be assessed through a professional responsibility portfolio prepared by the director/coach in the normal evaluation cycle for the institution. That portfolio should include one or more of the following:

- A summary of team-building and other coaching efforts carried out by the coach;
- A summary of team performance at tournaments in the review period;
- A sample of research briefs created during the debate season. This material might be published in the on-line journal on best practices in debate argumentation;
- A summary of the director/coach's work as a judge in debate and how this judging functioned as a means of carrying on an academic dialogue concerning research relevant to the debate resolution;
- Information about public debates and other events in which the debate squad participated;
- A summary of pedagogical efforts training coaches and future directors of debate;
- A summary of efforts to secure external funding for research, programming, and/or outreach and development programs, e.g. Urban Debate Leagues (UDLS);
- A summary of alumni development and other outreach efforts;

- Traditional academic research, including research focused on pedagogical issues in argumentation and debate in journals such as *Argumentation and Advocacy*, *Contemporary Argumentation and Debate*, and *Argumentation* or proceedings from argumentation conferences such as Alta, ISSA and OSSA, outlets that have played a key role in the development of argumentation and debate/forensics theory and practice (note, that such research is not a required part of the appointment); (note, that such research is not a required part of the appointment);
- Other appropriate information bearing on the professional performance of the coach.

Under the professional responsibility model, the debate director/coach should be evaluated in the same way that a Clinical Professor or other professional with teaching, but not research, responsibilities is evaluated. For example, the Basic Course Director at a number of universities is evaluated under a model in which professional performance takes the place of research in the evaluation scheme. Similarly, a clinical professor managing a clinic or laboratory would be evaluated based on their work in the clinic or laboratory, as well as their teaching, and not based on publications. Some universities may want to give the debate director/coach a particular title analogous to clinical professor in order to account for the nature of the position.

The professional responsibility model provides an appropriate way of accounting for the massive time commitment associated with as well as the pedagogical importance of coaching debate. Under this approach, a debate director/coach could be placed in a tenure-track faculty line with all the rights and privileges thereof, but evaluated under the professional responsibility model. The director/coach could be tenured in this position and post-tenure remain in it, continuing to fill the position as director/coach. Alternatively, the professional responsibility model could be used for renewable term appointments of three or five years. The tenure-track model is preferable because it provides greater stability.

***Model Two—Debate Performance as a Form of Research in a Tenure-Track Model***

While the professional responsibility model is an appropriate means of evaluating the performance of a debate coach, the Debate Performance model is a more appropriate model at institutions with a substantial research focus. Under this approach, a season of debate is viewed as itself a form of research in the same way that directing a theatrical production is viewed as a form of creative performance in theater. This model accounts for the enormous demands of debate and also recognizes that academic debate is itself an enormously research-intensive activity. In the course of a debate season, the arguments produced under the direction of any director/coach reach literally hundreds of debaters, judges, and other coaches. In that way, the ideas are presented and tested in a public setting at least as rigorous as the peer-review process for academic publication. Recognizing that debate performance is itself a form of research provides a means of fairly evaluating the work of a director/coach and minimizing the danger that the director/coach will be viewed as academically inferior to other research faculty.

The Debate Performance model requires a means of assessing the research dimension in a season of debate in a way similar to that which is used in theater to assess the creative performance value in a theatrical production. Drawing on the experience in theater, debate directors/coaches should be evaluated based on one or more of the following:

- A portfolio of research materials including research briefs representing a broad sample of the team's research efforts over the course of the debate season. This material might be published in the on-line journal on best practices in debate argumentation;
- A summary of the director/coach's work as a judge in debate and how this judging functioned as a means of carrying on an academic dialogue concerning research relevant to the debate resolution;
- A two-page statement explaining the intellectual importance of the research produced over the course of the season;
- A summary of pedagogical efforts training coaches and future directors of debate;
- A summary of efforts to secure external funding for research, programming, and/or outreach and development programs, e.g. Urban Debate Leagues (UDLS);
- Peer review statements on the research performance of the team by debate critics certified for their excellence in argument by the National Debate Tournament, the Cross Examination Debate Association, and other appropriate debate organizations, operating under the general sponsorship of the American Forensic Association, the leading professional organization in argumentation studies. In theater, peer reviewers are certified by leading organizations and their views are consulted on the quality of theatrical productions. A similar process would work well in debate and be much easier to organize because of the tournament focused nature of the activity. The standards needed to be classified as a peer critic would be validated by debate organizations and the American Forensic Association;
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- Other appropriate information bearing on the professional performance of the coach.

The Debate Performance model provides an appropriate model for appointing and evaluating the academic performance of debate coaches. It recognizes the immense demands placed on directors/coaches and provides a means of evaluating that performance that does not risk labeling the director/coach as a non-research and therefore lesser faculty member. Rather, it recognizes that a season of debate involves just as strong and rigorous a commitment to academic research as does participation in the peer review publication process. Under this approach, a debate director/coach could be placed in a tenure-track faculty line, with all the rights and privileges thereof, but evaluated

under the debate performance model. The director/coach could be tenured in this position and post-tenure remain in it, continuing to fill the position as director/coach.

## **Appointment Expectations**

In order to clearly establish appointment expectations, it is important that letters of appointment specify the responsibilities of the director/coach and the criteria under which his/her performance will be evaluated both in terms of the annual merit process and in terms of promotion and tenure. The letter of appointment should articulate the relationship of the director/coach and the debate/forensics program to the mission of the program, department, college, and university.

## **Promotion to Professor**

Each of the models for appointment and evaluation that were described earlier could be used to set standards for promotion to Professor. The faculty member would again use the portfolio process, but with the aim of demonstrating that he/she was a major intellectual leader in the activity, as defined by the criteria for evaluating the portfolio under either the professional performance or the debate performance models.

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<sup>1</sup> We are heavily indebted to the *NCA Performance Studies Division: Tenure and Promotion Guidelines for Understanding and Evaluating Creative Activity*, n.d. for the language of these previous two paragraphs. Additional references include Voice and Speech Trainers Association, Inc., *Promotion, Tenure and Hiring Resources*, 2002; Association for Theatre in Higher Education, *Guidelines for Evaluating the Teacher/Director for Promotion and Tenure*, August 1992; *Good Practice in Tenure Evaluation: Advice for Tenured Faculty, Department Chairs and Academic Administrators-A Joint Project of the American Council on Education, The American Association of University Professors, and United Educators Insurance Risk Retention Group*, 2000.