

Truman Forensic Union Handbook

*A Guide to the History, Expectations, and Procedures
of the Truman Forensics Program 2008-2009*

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The Purpose of This Handbook

Every team needs a tradition. At Truman State University, the forensic tradition is nearly as old as the institution. The first intercollegiate debating society was formed in 1899, but public speaking contests started as early as the 1880s. Former forensics competitors are among the most prominent alumni of the institution and include names like Ryle (of Ryle Hall), McKinney (of McKinney Center) Newman, and Corbin (for whom scholarships are named). Several current faculty members were also competitors here. While debate is the oldest continuous forensic tradition at Truman, individual events has been an integral part of the program since the 1970's. Truman State was one of the earliest chapters of Pi Kappa Delta, a national speech honorary. Yet, as new generations of competitors and new administrators have shaped the growing program, it has been very easy to lose sight of the program's older traditions. It is our aim to

embrace the old traditions while initiating new ones.

This handbook is part of that tradition. Many fraternities and sororities give their members handbooks to learn and reference as “pledges.” While we do not have “pledges,” and do not practice secret rituals, the information contained in this booklet is no less valuable to your experience here. Take the time to learn and understand the rules and suggestions set-out here. They are meant to help you have a better experience. More importantly, however, these ideas are meant to form the foundation of the “organizational culture” that is Truman State University Forensics.

Welcome aboard.

A Short History of Truman Forensics

From the 1880s through late 1890s, various oratorical contests routinely took place at what would one day become Truman State University. In the 1898-1899 school year, the organization of a student society devoted to developing the debating and oratorical abilities of its members was established at North Missouri Normal School and Commercial College. In the beginning there were five debating clubs whose programs were composed of: debate, both prepared and extemporaneous; public speaking, both prepared and extemporaneous; and the discussion of current events.

In 1901, the administration decided to form one debating league and for the first time women were allowed to debate. Truman (under its older name) was competing against such schools as the University of Nebraska (Peru), Southeast Missouri State University, Central Missouri State University, William Jewell, Westminster, Washington University, and at times, Cambridge University of England.

Truman State University has been competing nationally in debate and forensic activities since the early 1930's. The theta chapter is one of the earliest members of Pi Kappa Delta, the national forensic fraternity. Truman has also played host to debate teams from Japan, Russia, and the United Kingdom. A proud tradition of excellence has been established and carried forth by debaters and speakers for the last century. Their devotion to fair and competitive debating and public speaking has brought home shelves full of awards, including numerous state and national honors, including the 2001, 2002, and 2003 Overall Missouri State Forensics Championships, multiple State Championships in Individual Events, top ten rankings in NFA Division I, II and III Sweepstakes, fifth in the 2003 NFA Open Division Sweepstakes, four AFA and NFA final round appearances, the 2000 and 2004 NPDA National Championships, the 2000 NPDA Sweepstakes Championship, and the 2003 NPDA Season Sweepstakes Championship Runner-Up. Multiple students have represented Truman at the Interstate Oratorical Contest, including a 4th place finish in 2006. Truman has also earned

multiple titles at the Pi Kappa Delta National Tournament.

The Five D Rules

In the 1960's, at Wayne State University (Detroit), the Director of Forensics recognized that a code of conduct was necessary to ensure that competitors put their best face in public view. Since the "Five Ds" were written, former students of the Wayne program have carried the code to their new institutions as Directors. These rules are simple, guiding principles.

1. **Delivery:** Competitors should always make good delivery a priority and be prepared to perform their best in any context.
2. **Decorum:** Competitors should consider themselves official ambassadors of the University and conduct themselves with the utmost grace, civility, and politeness wherever they travel. (See a separate section on "Decorum" in this manual.)
3. **Dress:** A well-dressed competitor makes a good first impression on his or her audience. All University competitors will dress professionally for competition.
4. **Deodorant:** Cleanliness is next to godliness. Travel involves long periods together in confined spaces. Be considerate of your teammates' olfactory sense.
5. **Drinking and Drugs:** Consumption of controlled substances is forbidden on trips, at team events, or in any context directly associated with team participation (See a separate section in the manual.)

These rules should function as a supplement to common sense, and while all of us will occasionally deviate from some of the less stringent of these guidelines, regular disregard for these rules—particularly those elaborated on elsewhere in this document—can and will result in removal from the team.

The Ten Commandments of Tournament Decorum and Competitive Ethics

1. Thou shalt not have any other team or coach before thy own (your team and your teammates are your first priority).
2. Thou shalt not make a graven image of thyself or a teammate before other competitors (you shall act with humility about your own success in front of other competitors).
3. Thou shalt not take the name of your coach in vain (no matter how mad you are about a decision, in public, you are supportive).
4. Remember the "tournament schedule" and keep it holy (be on time and don't complain).
5. Honor thy teammate and thy competitor, holding them in equal esteem (be positive no matter how angry they may have made you).

6. Thou shalt not complain about the tournament, a judge, or other competitors while at the tournament (A.K.A.: "The 55 MPH Rule"--wait until you're in the van on the freeway.)
7. Thou shalt not be a bad audience member (show everyone the cheer and support you would want).
8. Thou shalt not report poor personal performances to teammates (because negative vibes bring us all down).
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness about a teammate or competitor (we will not contribute to gossip on the circuit).
10. Thou shalt not covet another competitor's words (we write our own material--teammates, fellow competitors, and coaches may not write your speeches for you; obey the NFA Code of Ethics).

Policy About Drinking and Drugs

The landscape of the forensics community is littered with the remnants of programs that were killed because of scandals related to alcohol and drug consumption. During your career you will likely compete with a few competitors who are hung-over and judges who are not sober. **We are not such a program.** An effective competitor is a clear-minded and focused competitor and an effective coach, in part, is one who does not have to worry about the risks associated with illegal or irresponsible conduct under his or her supervision. We are not passing judgment about what students choose to do on their own time, but when you are traveling on the University's dime, reasonable restrictions shall be imposed.

The use or possession of drugs (controlled substances) is strictly forbidden on any team trip or at any official team function. The penalty for breaking this rule is immediate and irrevocable expulsion from the program.

The use of alcohol on any team trip or at any official team function is strictly *regulated*. Legal drinkers (age 21 or over) may only consume alcohol on the **final day of a tournament** (after competition has ended for all competitors on the team), and only with the consent of the attending coach. The attending coach reserves the right to deny students the ability to consume alcohol if he or she deems it inappropriate at that time. Moreover, students designated as "relief drivers" (certified drivers driving for scholarship or institutional hours), may not consume alcohol when driving will be part of the responsibilities (which, generally speaking, is on all trips). Minors (21 and under) may never drink when traveling or attending an official team function. No competitor who is eligible to drink may drink to excess. Any competitor deemed "drunk" by the attending coach may have their drinking privilege permanently revoked at the Director of Forensics' discretion.

No alcohol may be transported in a University or rented vehicle and no University funds (meal per diem) may be used to purchase alcohol. In practice, this means

any alcohol purchased must be on a separate bill if meals are paid on one check. If you are paying your own bill, our assumption is that you are supplementing your own meal per diem to pay for alcohol.

An “official team function” is defined as any activity--whether on campus, at a private home, or elsewhere--which (a) is attended by a member of the coaching staff in an official capacity and/or (b) is organized by team officers and advertised as a team gathering at team meetings, practices, COMM 272 classes, or other formal team gatherings, or (c) would be deemed by any reasonable person to be a team function. In other words, a **chance encounter** by a coach and a handful of team members at a local bar or restaurant would not constitute an official team function, but a holiday party promoted at a team meeting would. Team members are advised, however, that perception sometimes can trump policy in the media and for those who might judge the team’s actions. Consequently, when significant numbers of team members are gathered together—whether the event is official or not—and alcohol is being consumed, students should act prudently and responsibly.

Team members are asked to understand that, like a social fraternity or sorority, the forensics program and Pi Kappa Delta are advised by faculty. The supervising faculty can be held responsible for any inappropriate or illegal activity associated with a team function. Moreover, illegal activity associated with travel can result in sanctions against the entire program. In the event of an arrest involving a minor, anyone over 21 years of age present can, theoretically, be charged for facilitating that individual’s actions--regardless of whether they have immediate knowledge of the activity.

Violation of these rules is punishable by suspension or permanent removal from the program at the discretion of the Director of Forensics. If warranted, certain rule violations may be forwarded to the appropriate University judicial body. As with any such decision, the decision is subject to appeal and review.

Policy on Sexual Harassment

Truman State University and the forensics program will not condone sexual harassment in any form. All applicable definitions published in University rules and regulations apply to official functions of the forensics program. As a member of various national competitive organizations, we will also abide by those organizations’ policies regarding inappropriate conduct, which are often more strict than local codes. When on another campus, students may be subject to the harassment codes of the campus they are visiting.

Sexual harassment includes, but may not be limited to, unwanted sexual advances, the use of a relationship of power to coerce sexual favors, inappropriate or offensive comments or jokes of a sexual nature, and comments of a sexual nature that promote a hostile working or competitive environment.

Perception of the receiver, rather than the intent of the speaker is key.

Harassment may also include inappropriate interactions with students, coaches, or judges from other programs, including interactions with these individuals at tournaments. We recommend maintaining an appropriate professional distance in these contexts. While romantic bonds between students of one team and coaches or judges of another have been known to occur, they often lead to competitive complications—even if harassment issues are not an immediate concern.

Recognizing that the close working environment of forensic competition often results in casual conversations among students, using informal language, without the implicit intent to harass, students are urged to make their feelings about inappropriate comments or conduct clear to the offending individual, and said individual is expected to cease such offensive behavior, no matter how trivial they consider it to be. This is generally appropriate if the student on the receiving end of the communication is offended, but does not necessarily feel the activity has risen to the level of harassment.

Individuals who feel they have been a victim of sexual harassment are encouraged to bring such activity to the attention of the Director of Forensics for appropriate action. They may choose to confront the individual who is the alleged source of the harassment as a prior step to resolving the issue, but they are by no means required to take such action.

Important: Because the Director and coaches cannot police all speech acts during team functions, it is assumed that students will take the initiative in notifying the Director, another staff member, or the appropriate University authorities if a situation they deem uncomfortable occurs. We are not the thought and language police and cannot realistically reprimand students every time a word some might deem inappropriate is uttered. “Appropriateness,” we have learned over the years of our careers, can vary significantly for different people. While the administration of the forensics program will do all that it can to prevent an environment hostile to working and learning, we will not reprimand students engaged in casual conversation unless such language is so clearly offensive as to be considered inappropriate by any reasonable college student or faculty member. Program participants should take an active part in promoting a culture of inclusiveness, tolerance and comfort for all participants.

Tolerance

In a similar vein, students should recognize that discrimination and harassment is not always sexual in nature. Particularly on a debate and speech team, diversity **MUST** be cherished. You will find your teammates come from highly diverse backgrounds, political beliefs, religious traditions, and so forth. This team welcomes all students regardless of gender, religion, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, affectional preference, or class. Similarly this team embraces the

ideological diversity of its members. While toleration of everyone is expected, students should refrain from making statements that, by their very nature, are designed to exclude others, or would make it uncomfortable for another student to continue participating in the program. Arguments should be about ideas, not people.

Policy About Travel Safety

Recent years have witnessed the unfortunate death and injury of forensic competitors from other schools driving to and from tournaments. We view safety as a top priority on all trips, no matter how long. We have a perfect safety record. All travel involving members of the Truman State University forensics program will involve the use of State of Missouri fleet vehicles or private vehicles rented on a state contract. The following rules always apply to forensics travel.

1. Students may not drive vehicles unless they are approved and trained University employees or, if approved, scholarship workers. Students may not transport fellow students to or from tournaments in their own vehicles. Occasional exceptions can be made to this policy when tournaments occur over holidays and car-pooling of students to or from their home cities would already have taken place. Such arrangements must be approved in advance by the Director. This policy exists to ensure that program participants fall under the University's protective insurance umbrella in the event of an accident.
2. When traveling, all students **MUST** wear a seatbelt. Their place in the van or the law of the state they are traveling in does not supersede this rule. In the event of an accident, the responsible coach will be required to document the location of a student in the van and confirm that they were wearing a seatbelt. Similarly, passengers may not sleep on the floor of a van.
3. By Missouri Statute, no person may smoke, flick lighters, burn incense, or otherwise ignite materials in a State vehicle.
4. Passengers should never engage in "back seat driving" unless asked to provide specific directional information.
5. Passengers should follow the directions and respond to the requests of the person driving, regardless of how inconvenient they may appear at the time. In most instances, these requests are made to ensure your safety in response to the conditions of the moment.
6. Passenger capacity in University vans may not exceed nine people at any time. This policy is inviolable, and includes rental vehicles.
7. It is against University policy to transport non-students unless their transport is considered in the best interests of the institution (such as touring prospective students). Please do not offer students from other schools transportation in our vans.
8. It is **NEVER** appropriate to make jokes about driving or driving conditions while travel is in progress. Such jokes may inadvertently distract or

- misinform the driver in a hazardous way.
9. In most states vehicles cannot drive with their dome lights on. For the purposes of our policy, dome lights will only be used when it is absolutely necessary to read directions or similar materials. If you anticipate the need to study during a night drive, invest in a flashlight, USB light or other non-distracting lighting tool.

“Legal Stuff”

All participants will be required to sign and/or complete some basic paperwork before competing for the Truman Forensic Union. These documents exist both to protect the student and the organization and its staff.

A Medical History/Treatment Waiver: This form is designed to fulfill two purposes. The senior coach on any team trip will carry a binder containing the medical histories of all students so that, in the event of a medical emergency, this information might be conveyed to health care professionals. This form also contains a place for your signature (and that of a parent or guardian if you are under 18). In the unlikely event that you are incapacitated in a medical emergency, this form allows the coaching staff to take action to get you medical care AND contact your next-of-kin for permission (if needed) for more serious treatment.

Memorandum of Understanding: This form certifies that you have read, or will soon read, the team’s policies regarding personal conduct on team trips. In signing this document you will be acknowledging that you are aware of your financial reimbursement obligations, your obligations with regard to academics and the conditions under which you might face disciplinary action by the team’s administration. The form also certifies that any photos taken of you at tournaments or official campus functions may be used for publicity and commercial purposes into perpetuity.

Suggestions About Tournament Dress

Both the individual events and parliamentary debate communities maintain certain expectations for appropriate attire. If one phrase could describe appropriate dress in totality, we would say that competitors should dress professionally, as if they were in a business environment or attending a job interview.

For men the centerpiece should be a suit or sport coat and tie. Women should wear comparably appropriate business attire. Suits, dresses, blouse/skirt combinations are good, but increasingly, the centerpiece of most female competitors’ wardrobes is the business suit (with pants or skirt).

The coaching staff reserves the right to deny you the ability to compete for

Truman if your attire is inappropriate or poorly represents the program or the University. If you are unsure about your choices, ask a coach.

Some helpful suggestions worth following:

1. Make sure clothes match and/or are appropriately coordinated for color, style, stripes, etc.
2. Avoid "loud" clothes--funky ties, "ice cream" colored suits, things that look like solar panels and cellophane.
3. Belts and shoes should match. Belts and suspenders (braces) should not be worn together.
4. Tournament shoes are "dress shoes"--not tennis shoes, sandals or flip-flops, Doc Martens, or Timberlands. No open-toed shoes.
5. Avoid wearing things that "show through" sheer clothing (such as black undergarments under a white blouse).
6. No fishnets!
7. Women should be prepared with spare hosiery as there are inevitably runs. Men should bring an appropriate quantity of clean socks. Hosiery should match or appropriately coordinate with your clothes. **NO WHITE TUBE SOCKS!!!**

Most tournaments last two to three days. Nationals may last as long as four or five days. Students should develop their competitive wardrobes accordingly. While this wouldn't necessarily require a four or five suit wardrobe, it does mean that students should be able to change shirts, ties, and other accessories to appear fresh and new during each day of competition. Colors that go well with everything (black, blue, sometimes browns or grays) can help you reuse a suit during the same tournament.

If you are unsure about what you're wearing--ASK!!!

Expectations About Practice

All team members are expected to meet minimum practice expectations to remain on the team and/or receive credit for COMM 272: Speech Communication Activities. These expectations include: regular attendance at team meetings as called by the coaching staff, regular participation in coaching appointments or practice debates, as defined by the coaching staff, and competition in at least two intercollegiate tournaments per semester.

The team is divided into five components: Debate Varsity, IE Varsity, Debate Junior Varsity, and IE Junior Varsity, and Developmental. **Varsity** students are in the team's top tier and travel a national or highly competitive circuit. **Junior Varsity** students are in the team's second tier and travel a more regional circuit. These divisions are fluid and, based on work and performance, students can either be elevated or demoted to a circuit that more appropriately reflects their

commitment and success. The Varsity tier is limited to four NPDA teams and eight IE competitors (16). The Junior Varsity tier is limited to four NPDA teams and eight IE competitors (16). The maximum traveling team size, therefore, is 32 during any given competitive season. Additional students may practice in the Developmental Track, which is designed to train students for future competition.

More specifically, the team expects the following normal workload from its competitors:

Practice Schedule

Members of the forensics team are required to attend each week's mandatory team practice. This practice begins at 7 PM and ends at 10 PM on Tuesday nights. Coaches are present beginning at 6 PM to handle individual appointments.

In addition to Tuesday night, coaches will schedule practice debates on Monday and Wednesday evenings (and occasionally on other days early in the season) to supplement the Tuesday schedule. These practices supplement Tuesday night and are scheduled as needs arise or in response to a request by students. Similarly, IE students are encouraged to schedule appointments outside of Tuesday evening in half-hour time slots. Each coach working with IE will have a schedule posted on their door each week to schedule supplemental appointments.

Generally speaking, students will need more time at the beginning of the year to practice than they do in mid-season. IE competitors, in particular, will need to do more work at the beginning of the season to prepare, practice, and memorize their material. While time commitments vary for each student, the most successful competitors are rarely able to confine their work to one night per week. Students are encouraged to plan their weekly schedule so as to allow routine time to work on forensics projects—much like one would routinely schedule workouts at the Rec Center or practice time in the Language Lab.

Availability

Students participating in forensics **may not take evening classes** unless they are required for their major or play a uniquely important role in their academic program that cannot be satisfied by another appropriately-timed course.

Students should make every attempt to maximize the number of courses in their schedule that meeting between Tuesday and Thursday. While it is rarely possible to avoid Monday-Wednesday-Friday classes, fewer such classes means less academic impact from tournaments. Students should NEVER take classes that meet only on Friday or only on Monday.

How the Forensics Time Commitment Compares to Other Activities

If you're thinking that the time commitment for forensics seems like a lot, consider what other activities do, including ones for little kids...

Lexington-Bedford Pop Warner Football

In-season: twice weekly three hour practices, plus conditioning sessions. Competitors may sign up for up to four, hour-long sessions, a week but are required to participate in at least two. Competitors are also expected to put in at least two hours a week studying the playbook.

Off-season: Conditioning requirements continue, with top competitors completing four sessions a week. In addition, competitors are required to attend two boot camps, one for general technique and one for strategy. Each bootcamp consists of eight hours a week of meetings, spread over four days and lasting a month.

Total commitment: 12 hours/week in-season, 10-12 hours a week off-season.

Williamsport High School Football

Off-season: sessions of weights, plyometrics and speed training. This schedule has competitors lifting three days a week for a minimum of two hours a day, alternating with stretching, aerobics and plyometrics in-between. Varsity competitors are expected to also work out on Saturday. Tests are performed monthly and progress must be demonstrated on physical variables (strength, speed, flexibility). Competitors are also required to put in two to four hours a week learning the playbook, and are tested.

Total commitment: 14-16 hours/week minimum for varsity competitors

Truman State University Football

Off-season: 1½ hours of physical conditioning each weekday morning at 6:30 AM, combined with individual strength and conditioning work with coaches. Varsity competitors put in a minimum of 10 logged hours a week. In addition, players are expected to study the playbook for weekly tests.

Enforcement: Missing a single conditioning session results in coming an hour early to the next session to do towel pushes (a very punishing activity). A second violation and the whole unit of the violator does towel pushes and the competitor may be suspended from competition. A third results in a hearing in front of the unity council and often removal from the team.

Total commitment: 15-17 hours/week minimum for varsity competitors

University of Wisconsin Dance Team

Off-season: Three 3-hour practices and one 2-hour practice a week, plus team meetings Tuesday and Thursday night 6-10 PM. One additional ballet practice is added for three hours on Saturday toward the end of the off-season, as well as a rehearsal on Sunday nights for three hours.

Total commitment: 19-25 hours/week

Most High School Forensics Programs

Assuming students ONLY prepared for competition in a speech/debate class that met one hour per day, high school competitors are engaged in preparation five hours per week. Schools on block schedules are further engaged. Thus, the actual face-to-face practice commitment for Truman Forensics is about the same as high school forensics. Naturally, memorization, research, and brief-writing are out-of-class/practice tasks, much as they are in high school.

Expectations About Academics

Academic obligations come first. Forensics will never be allowed to interfere with academic excellence.

Responsibilities of the Student

1. The student must inform the coaching staff of any academic conflicts that prevent participation at team events, practices or competitions. They must do so as far in advance as possible.
2. The student is responsible for keeping the coaching staff up-to-date on progress in class and making the coach aware of any classroom difficulties that he or she believes could interfere with forensics (or are being caused by forensics). If the student's GPA drops below a 3.0, students are expected to actively engage the coaching staff to develop a plan for maintaining a good GPA.
3. The student shall present all professors with travel notes at two weeks (preferably three) in advance of an intended absence and verbally warn that professor at least a week in advance of the impending absence. Failure to deliver these notes can result in revocation of travel privileges.

IMPORTANT: THESE NOTES ARE NOT EXCUSES. EACH PROFESSOR HAS THE RIGHT TO PENALIZE STUDENTS FOR TRAVEL WITH FORENSICS (though they rarely do). It is the responsibility of each student to communicate with professors early to make sure this problem does not occur.

4. Students who withdraw from tournaments for which airline tickets have been purchased in advance, or within 48 hours of a tournament for which late drop fees are imposed, will be liable for those charges regardless of the cause (including academic causes). Thus, students are expected to

plan responsibly and monitor their own academic standing. Students liable for these charges will not be allowed to travel until the fees have been reimbursed.

Responsibilities of the Coaching Staff

1. The coaching staff will not require a student to attend team functions if it is evident that such attendance will interfere with the timely or efficient completion of quality academic work. However, regular absences will not be tolerated when it is evident that the student's own work habits have caused the problem.
2. The coaching staff will monitor each student's academic performance to the best of their ability and will pull students from competition in jeopardy of poor academic performance. The coaching staff shall invoke their "need to know" access to obtain midterm and final grades each semester and reserves the right to contact any student's professor to verify attendance and consistent performance.
3. The coaching staff will provide documentation of absences on letterhead at least three weeks in advance of travel, when possible, as well as a summary schedule for each student at the beginning of the semester.
4. Coaches will suspend students from travel who have a cumulative GPA of lower than 2.25 or a semester GPA of 2.0 or lower (regardless of the cumulative GPA). Students with GPA's lower than 2.0 are ineligible for competition as are students on Academic Probation.

Students who claim to be absent from class for forensics at times when they are not traveling will be immediately and irrevocably suspended from competition.

Students MUST meet the eligibility requirements of the NPDA and AFA/NFA, as well as those of the University. These organizations expect enrollment in at least six credit hours NOT counting forensics (including COMM 272). Our expectation is that students will be enrolled full-time (12 credit hours) unless (a) they are in the last semester of school, (b) have a unique academic justification approved by the coaching staff.

Nationals and How You Qualify For Them

Each national forensic organization has its own eligibility rules. In addition to these rules, the Forensic Union has standards it uses to determine whether a student may represent Truman at nationals.

How to Qualify for Debate Nationals (NPDA)

At present there exist no qualification standards for the NPDA National Championships. The tournament is considered an "open tournament," which means that anyone who is academically eligible to attend, and is a member of a

participating member school's program, may compete. Each school "nominates" the teams that will compete. The only potential limitation is the available space at the host site, which can result in a limitation on the number of teams each school may bring to nationals.

Truman has an internal qualification procedure that supercedes that of the national tournament. This is done to ensure that the highest quality teams represent Truman at Nationals. Only teams that have achieved Varsity standing will represent Truman at NPDA Nationals. To qualify to attend the national tournament in parliamentary debate, the team must reach elimination rounds at invitational tournaments three times. Only one of these tournaments can be in a novice or junior division. (It is Truman's policy not to enter a team in novice or junior division after they have reached an elimination round in one of these divisions.)

In the event that partners change during the season, the two partners together in the newly assembled team must have reached three elimination rounds between them.

Exceptions to this policy may be made for extenuating circumstances (students studying abroad, students facing unique academic conflicts in a semester) or in the event that alternative or experimental debate events emerge at this or another national tournament.

Our internal qualification system is designed to ensure quality representation at the national tournament and serves as an incentive for effective season-long performance.

Generally speaking, and for budgetary reasons, no more than four teams will represent Truman at any given NPDA Championship Tournament.

How to Qualify for IE Nationals (Pi Kappa Delta, NFA, or AFA-NIET)

Depending on the season, IE students will compete in either the NFA, AFA-NIET or Pi Kappa Delta Nationals.

The process of qualifying for the AFA-NIET nationals is significantly more complicated. The American Forensics Association-National Individual Events Tournament enables students to qualify for nationals either through an at-large process (through successful performance at multiple invitational tournaments) or through a district tournament.

The at-large process is also known as the "Leg System." A student must earn three "legs" to qualify for nationals through this system. A "leg" is earned by reaching a final round at a qualifying invitational tournament. The ranks in these three final rounds cannot exceed a total of eight (1-1-6, 1-2-3, 2-2-4, and so on).

Not all final round appearances count, however. Thus, merely appearing in a final when the original field in the event was six is not sufficient.

The following break-down is used to determine which final round placements are eligible.

1 to 4 entries = 1st Place Counts 5 to
8 entries = 2nd Place Counts 9 to 12
entries = 3rd Place Counts 13-16
entries = 4th Place Counts 17-20
entries = 5th Place Counts Over 20
entries = 6th Place Counts

Students not qualifying an event through the at-large qualification system may qualify an event through the District Tournament. Truman is presently in AFA-NIET District Five (which includes only Truman in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Michigan). Qualifications are based on the size of the entry in an event at Districts. Districts may count as a third “leg” if the district tournament is sufficiently large.

To qualify for NFA Nationals, a student need only reach the final round of a qualifying invitational tournament. To qualify, the tournament must have at least nine schools present and there must be a minimum number of students entered in each event. Generally speaking, if there are 11 students or more, six qualify. Novice divisions can also qualify a student for NFA Nationals.

Truman has internal qualification standards for individual events as well. To attend nationals, students must qualify at least two or three events. Generally speaking, the preference is for three events, unless a student has only two and one of them is a duo. In an AFA year, to attend districts, a student must have already qualified two events through the leg system OR qualified one event and have two “low” legs (1s or 2s) toward a second event. This policy is designed to encourage early qualification and high quality. In the event that more students are qualified to attend IE nationals than the program can afford (generally more than 8), those with the most events qualified will generally be given priority for travel.

It cannot be under-stated that qualification for IE nationals is difficult and requires a concerted and consistent effort.

Our Philosophy on Nationals Attendance

Attendance at any tournament—especially Nationals—is a privilege that is earned. It is not a reward for longevity in the program. It is entirely possible that a person might attend Nationals in one year and not attend in the next. A variety

of factors including, but not limited to, budget, team size, distance of the tournament site from Kirksville, and most importantly, competitive performance and effort are factors in deciding who attends nationals.

This policy may be revised or set aside if the coaching staff deems it necessary to facilitate competition in a given year.

Event Descriptions and Basic Preparatory Advice

This team is BIG. Our coaching staff is relatively small. While we try to assert close oversight over your day-to-day preparations for competition, we expect that you will take the primary role in preparing materials for competition. Peer coaching will be a regularly-used tool to advance our preparatory goals. A good first step you can take is to familiarize yourself with what these events are and how they are prepared.

Extemporaneous Speaking (7 Minutes)

If you have seen this event in high school, it is essentially the same in college (with some variations). Students present a seven-minute speech answering a question related to current events. Unlike high school competition, there are not separate events for foreign and domestic topics. Students maintain a single, collective file of newspaper and magazine clippings used as support for the arguments in these speeches. Normally, competitors receive a set of three questions, from which they select one. Once the questions have been received the student has 30 minutes to research, prepare and memorize the seven-minute speech. The event is substantially evidence driven, usually containing at least six or seven source citations. See a separate document on limited preparation available on the team website.

Truman has had two national finalists in this event.

Impromptu Speaking (Up to 7 Minutes)

Often seen as extemporaneous speaking's cheap little brother/sister, impromptu speaking is really a very challenging and enriching event. Impromptu speakers receive one or two quotations (or sometimes objects, cartoons or other points of focus). If there is more than one quotation the student selects between them. The competitor has a total of seven minutes to both prepare and speak. As a general rule, competitors use no more than 90 seconds to prepare—leaving a little over five minutes of actual speaking time. The quotation serves as the basis for formulating a thesis or claim. The speech is used to explain and support the thesis through the use of examples and analogies. See a separate document on limited preparation available on the team website.

Truman has advanced as far as national semifinals in this event.

Persuasive Speaking (10 Minutes)

The closest analog to persuasive speaking on the high school level is the event called “Original Oratory” in most states (and in NFL competition). The two events are substantially different, however. Tradition in college competition has made persuasive speaking decidedly policy-oriented. Persuasion is aimed at convincing the audience that they need to take action on a certain issue, or bring government, business and the community to act on it. Where a successful high school oration might argue that we need to be more tolerant of the needs of deaf people in our community, a collegiate persuasive speech would likely be much more specific. For example, a recent successful competitor on the college circuit advocated making American Sign Language (ASL) a part of the nation’s public school curriculum. A high school oration might broadly argue that we need to combat racism. A collegiate persuasive speech might argue that we need to tighten our environmental laws to combat the practice of placing hazardous waste and waste-producing facilities in areas primarily populated by racial minorities and the poor. This is not to suggest that one kind of speech is more or less valuable, simply that the collegiate form of the event tends to be significantly more specific. Generally speaking, most persuasive speeches are structured in a three-point outline: problem (what’s wrong?), cause (why is this happening, or what is preventing us from stopping it now?), and solution (what can we do to solve the problem?). Supporting testimony (usually in the form of direct quotations or paraphrased material from experts) is expected.

Informative Speaking (10 Minutes)

On the high school level, this event has not emerged nationally. Individual states, however, do offer variations of this event. On the collegiate level informative speeches are usually aimed at teaching the audience about something they might not know. Sometimes the speech teaches the audience about a new piece of technology, an interesting concept or a stunning breakthrough in human understanding. These speeches are generally not speeches of demonstration, though the speeches often employ visual aids.

There is no one uniform way to approach structuring this speech. One approach is the “topical” design, where the speaker isolates three (maybe two or four, depending on the content) major areas of focus on the chosen topic. For example, an informative speech on contemporary espionage techniques might be divided into points of human intelligence, electronic or signal intelligence and industrial espionage techniques. These would be chosen because they are logical focal points around which much of the research would “group.” Another, perhaps more common, approach to organizing the informative speech, is to begin with a point describing the subject, then offer a second point describing the applications of the thing, then concluding with a final point discussing the implications of that application. This structure is most often used when the topic is technical in nature. For example, a speech on the process of terraforming

(turning other planets into an earthlike environment) would begin with a point describing the process. A second point might address how the knowledge could be applied in practical ways (such as turning Mars into a colony). The third point might then discuss the ethical or scientific implications of the choice, such as the possibility of wiping-out unknown life forms on the terraformed planet. While the national trend over the last decade or so has brought mostly technical topics into the informative speaking round, judges are increasingly tiring of it. The cliché that has grown-up around the event suggests that, if the topic doesn't involve a cure for cancer or AIDS, the topic isn't competitive. While certainly not true, it seems that most rounds are saturated with technical developments with outlandishly promising health implications. Thus, our team has decided to favor non-technical topics whenever possible. Or topics tend to fall in the more conceptual category.

After Dinner Speaking (10 Minutes)

Some states offer an event called "Speaking to Entertain," but there is no consistent national standard on the high school level for this event. Often it looks more like a wedding toast than a substantive speech. After Dinner Speaking attempts to convey a serious/purposeful message through the use of humor. It is often useful to think of this event as either a persuasive or informative speech with jokes sprinkled in to make the message easier to absorb. The event is NOT stand-up comedy, however, and sadly, many competitors select relatively trivial topics as a vehicle to present ten minutes of slapstick. There is also a tendency for competitors to employ humor that is in very poor taste. As a general rule, we attempt to select topics of social or public policy importance that also lend themselves to good, "topical" humor. This means that the jokes naturally flow from the subject matter. They aren't inadvertent puns, double-entendres, etc., which the competitor forces into the speech.

Structurally, after dinner speeches most often are structured just like a persuasive speech. A smaller body of after dinner speeches are structured like informative speeches. A useful way to begin the process of shaping the speech is to prepare an outline similar to one of these two speeches. Then arguments should be written—quite possibly without humorous content—much as they would for the other two events. Then humor should be incorporated into the speech. REMEMBER: CONTENT DRIVES HUMOR. HUMOR DOES NOT DRIVE THE CONTENT. HUMOR SUPPORTS THE MESSAGE.

We have had a good deal of success in After Dinner Speaking, including a second place finish at nationals, a national semifinalist and several state champions.

Rhetorical Criticism (10 Minutes)

This event is, perhaps, the most challenging of the public address individual

events. The American Forensic Association calls the event Communication Analysis, while the National Forensic Association calls the event Rhetorical Criticism. The events are essentially the same. Competitors select a communication artifact (often a speech, an advertisement, a product, a piece of mass communication—such as a TV program) and conduct an analysis of the artifact using a scholarly model. The event is both challenging and intellectually stimulating. It also dovetails nicely with the work our students often do in the classroom.

Generally speaking, the competitor aims to provide an analysis that helps the audience better understand the artifact and how it functions rhetorically (persuasively). Competitors use analytical tools from academic journal articles in the communication discipline to provide this analysis. Structurally the speech usually consists of three points. The first point is a discussion of the model or methodology. The second point is an application of that model to the artifact, often involving further description of the artifact and an explanation of how the model expands our understanding of the artifact. Finally, the third point offers conclusions, both about the function or effectiveness of the artifact and the usefulness of the model.

As a program, we have a habit of selecting artifacts that are unique. By unique, we mean topics that one might not find by reading the newspaper each day. Recent topics have included a museum exhibit of plasticized human cadavers, a website called “Black People Love Us,” a parody church called “Landover Baptist Church,” and a food product marketed to the Islamic world called “Mecca Cola.” We have had rhetorical criticism competitors in national elimination rounds in four of the last seven years.

Prose Interpretation (8-10 Minutes)

Prose interpretation, as practiced on the college level, generally involves the presentation of a single piece of prose literature (short stories, essays, etc.). The selection can have one or more “voices,” and in this sense, is sometimes hard to distinguish from other interp events when being performed. There is generally a logical plot development in the piece with the cutting preserving a coherent story. The event is delivered from a script book, though it is memorized. Movement, unlike acting, is relatively limited to a narrow space, but competitors can “block” using the script book and body movement. Props and costuming are not permitted, as is the case with all interp events.

At times in the history of this event, competitors have embraced the concept of a “programmed” prose. The concept of “programming” is described in greater detail below under Program Oral Interpretation description. Essentially, a “programmed” prose involves the selection of a common theme and the organization of several different selections of prose cut to support the theme argumentatively.

Poetry Interpretation (8-10 Minutes)

Like prose, poetry is performed from a script book and conforms to similar standards of blocking. Poetry can be cut either from a single selection or programmed from multiple selections. "Programmed" poetry presentations are designed to pivot on a central theme, just as programs in Prose or Program Oral Interpretation do.

Competitors will find that literature, just as in mainstream poetry publications, tends not to rhyme. This sometimes means that poetry isn't clearly distinguishable from prose. However, the intent of the event is to select material that is published by the author as poetry.

Duo Interpretation (8-10 Minutes)

Duo involves two competitors performing a piece of dramatic literature. While the most common approach involves a cutting with only two characters, competitors occasionally incorporate multiple characters. Both competitors compete with script books, yet the script is memorized. The competitors generally have forward-focus or develop focal points which reflect their position in the scene. The performers do not make eye contact, however. Generally speaking, competitors move in a relatively limited range of space, blocking collectively similarly to how they might block individually in individual interp events. It is also widely believed that the competitors should not make physical contact with one another, though we are gradually seeing minor pushing of that envelope. Like the events described above, this is not an acting event. Thus, the performers are not presenting the literature as though they were on a stage.

Program Oral Interpretation (8-10 Minutes)

This is an event only done at AFA nationals and invitational tournaments which feed it (which includes every tournament we attend). POI involves a single student building an argument, through literature, around a central theme or claim. The catch is that the competitor must use two of the three genres of literature: prose, poetry and drama. While it is theoretically possible to place a line or two of poetry into a sea of prose, the practice of this event generally assumes a good mix. Students are also allowed to include a single piece of original literature in the program. This event can be the most challenging of the interpretation events because it requires the formulation of an argument and the support of it through the strategic selection, cutting and arrangement of a range of literature.

Dramatic Interpretation (8-10 Minutes)

This event is essentially like dramatic interpretation and humorous interpretation in high school. The literature is drama. It can be, and often is, a dramatic monologue. There are also occasions where the competitor presents multiple

characters from a play. Presentation and script rules and conventions are much as they have been described above.

General Comments About Interp Events

While many public address events on the college level are entirely new to forensics competitors, competitors in interpretation events are often most frustrated by the change in community standards they encounter when they reach college. Here are several important points.

Script Books. Many states do not use these. Students use a small black binder with pages that contain the full, exact text of the literature they perform. Timing of page turns in the book is purposeful, often coinciding with scene changes, pauses, shocking moments or changes in selections.

Originality of Selections. Pieces that have been used before are often considered “dead” to the forensics community. This is especially true for pieces frequently seen on the high school level. This is not to say that these pieces are not good literature. However, there tends to be an expectation that competitors will bring original material forward. Thus, while you might see regular performances of “All American Girl” or “The Complete Works of William Shakespeare: Abridged” at high school tournaments year after year (and there are good reasons why that happens), you will not see that kind of repetition on the college level. The overwhelming majority of the literature that appears in a given college season will probably come from literature published in the last couple of years.

Content. Sadly, there are some common themes in interp rounds. Part of this comes from the dominance of certain themes in the literature currently being published. Have you ever heard jokes about country music that note the commonality of references to trucks, dogs, ex-wives, prison beer and one’s “Momma”? Similarly, jokes are often made in the forensics community that the quintessential interp selection would involve lots of cancer, AIDS, spousal/partner abuse, and exploration of one’s race or sexuality. Are these exaggerations? Certainly...just as the stereotypes about country music are. The point here, however, is that certain themes tend to repeat themselves. When one performs material emphasizing one of these themes they may find themselves competing against others using material on the same theme. Thus, it becomes harder to differentiate oneself from others. If possible, we encourage finding material outside of the body of these themes. However, when we discover literature on one of these themes that is uniquely good, we aim to cut it in such a way that shifts the focus to something unique.

Content-Focus. These events are more focused on interpreting the literature and less focused on acting. Performances are not theater productions. While performances may be physically and emotionally powerful, excessive melodrama

doesn't play well in college.

Debate Events and Sample Speeches: Visit

<http://forensics.truman.edu/coaching.htm>