

**Agenda**  
As of 2 p.m. Sept. 5  
**NFC Meeting 2002**  
**PLU**

Meeting Agenda

Procedurals

1. Thank you to PLU
2. Introduction of coaches, attendance
3. Introduction of officers
  - President (serving until May 2003)  
Brent Northup, Carroll
  
  - At Large Rep – announced at the meeting  
Derek Buescher or Jackson Miller
  
  - Community College Rep  
Chris Bragg, CSI (serving until May 2003)
  
  - NIET Rep  
Sam Mathies, Pacific (serving until May 2003)
  
  - NPDA Rep – announced at meeting  
Bill Sheffield/Gary Gillespie/Jil Freeman (serving until May 2002)
  
  - Policy Rep  
Glen Frappier, Gonzaga (serving until May 2003)
4. Budget Report
  - Cash on hand, August 31, 2002: \$1221.20
  - Cash on hand, August 31, 2001: \$1498.55
  - Loss of \$277.35 for 2001-2002 season
5. Budget recommendation: Increase fees to \$4.50 per student fee for 2002-2003 Designateds. (\$0.25 increase)
6. All Conference awards. Distributed by e-mail and at the meeting
7. Directory and calendar updated (latest version distributed at meeting)
8. Designated Reports: Oregon; Lewis-Clark State; Western Washington
9. Tournament Reports, any and all
10. Judge philosophy update
11. Policy discussion
  - a. Divisions discussion led by Chris Bragg (proposals enclosed)
12. Organizational Reports

1. CEDA, Jim Hanson
2. NDT, Glen Frappier
3. NPDA, Brian Shipley - includes topic area news
4. NIET, BN for Sam Mathies
5. PKD
6. DSRTKA
7. Interstate Oratory
8. Phi Rho Pi
9. Northwest Community College Championships
10. Seattle Urban Debate League, Derek
11. Portland Debate League
12. Other

## DIVISIONS DISCUSSION....TO BE LED BY CHRIS BRAGG

Colleagues,

As you will recall, last fall in Vancouver we were charged with coming up with a proposal for this fall's NFC meeting to deal with placement of competitors in novice, junior and senior divisions. After several attempts to generate a discussion among this committee about this topic (none of which have been especially successful) I have come to the conclusion that we should adopt one of the following proposals that have been generated by the committee. Please respond to me ASAP with your preference.

Once again, the members of this committee include:

Chris Bragg, Community College Rep (Designated Chair by Brent)  
Brent Northup, President  
Dave Kosloski, At-Large Rep  
Steve Johnson, NPDA Rep  
Glenn Frappier, Policy Rep  
Sam Mathies, NIET Rep  
Kelly Brennan, Clackamas Community College  
Mary Lynn Veden, Lewis and Clark College

Proposal #1: Do nothing. Perhaps the lack of interest in this topic suggests that the broader community does not see a need to change the status quo.

Proposal #2: Adopt Dave Kosloski's idea:  
(SUMMARY)

First, I think the divisions seem a little arbitrarily split. For example, if someone excels in limited prep events and earns three third place awards, he or she is moved to junior in all platform events. This seems a bit abusive--not all limited prep speakers are strong prepared platform speakers and vice-versa.

Second, a novice could enter three events at his or her first tournament (i.e., impromptu, extemp, and inform) and place third in each event. This would automatically require him or her to compete in junior at the very next tournament. Suppose there were only six entries in novice inform at the first tournament? Is a third place really so reflective of this student's talent that he/she should be advanced to junior?

Third, most other districts recognize novice competitors as being in their first year of collegiate competition. It seems rather arbitrary to base it on awards won and more equitable to base it on experience. For example, novice competitors could be in their first year of competition, junior

competitors in their second year, and open division could be for those with more than two years of experience or anyone who wants to compete in open. We could define a "year" as three quarters or two semesters so students could retain eligibility.

My reason for this suggestion is that I find as a community college coach that if I have a "star" student who excels in novice, he or she is quite motivated and excited. But, if after two tournaments I have to move this competitor to junior competition, and they fail to advance to a final round,

that enthusiasm wanes very quickly. I can't tell you how many times a student has gone to two tournaments and suddenly, when faced with stiffer competition in junior division, has bailed out. Sometimes winning IS the

only reason a student continues to compete and to pull that rug out from under them after one or two tournaments is a difficult position to be in as a coach. I'd prefer more time to work on getting that student to understand the other facets of forensics that are also important.

David L. Kosloski  
Director of Forensics  
Professor of Speech

Proposal #3: Adopt Brent Northup's idea:  
A POST FROM BRENT NORTHUP (CARROLL COLLEGE)  
(SUMMARY)

My only somewhat innovative idea is the concept of a "top three weekend." Since it is central to my thoughts, I'll explain in advance. A "top three weekend" is a weekend in which a student wins a first, second or third place award in some genre - short prep, platform, interp or debate. I propose that no student can be forced to leave novice until they experience three such weekends in a genre. The change is crucial: a student could win three awards at a swing, but that's only one "top three weekend," leaving two more such weekends before that student is bumped up. I think that might be more fair than just counting awards, as we do now.

Onward to my thoughts.

The question of novice, junior and senior is a complex one.

I would start by advocating that we keep all three divisions. There has been talk about having open only, as a way to "improve the caliber of IE performance in our region." I do not believe that. I believe the three divisions offer a ladder for students to climb as their skills improve. Lower divisions provide a chance for success as they advance towards senior/open division.

So let's keep all three.

An easy decision: Open is available to all, as always.

Junior and novice are tough decisions. Let me begin with an observation: that no rule can avoid being unfair to some students. A strict novice rule (no prior experience of any sort) means that a student from a small high school who entered a few tournaments and was not coached is not a novice. But clearly that student belongs in novice. A loose novice rule (all students in their first year of the event in college) means that a high school national champion could enter novice. That student does not belong in novice.

So on which side do we err?

I support erring towards a looser rule, allowing coach discretion on the choice. To some degree, we simply need to trust one another in the selection of divisions for our students. There are educational reasons for such decisions and there are competitive reasons for such decisions. We need to assume that coaches have education in mind when we adopt rules. That's the high ground, I believe.

With that in mind, I would work first towards some definitions, some exclusions, then towards the inevitable rules. I offer one new wrinkle - that we institute the idea of a "top-three weekend" into our definitions, thus overcoming a huge problem with current definitions in which a student could be eliminated from novice after a single day of competition. With all this in mind...a humble and long series of ideas:

Definitions:

An event consists in 10 students entered.

A tournament consists in 10 schools entered.

A semester of competition consists in three weekends of competition in which at least one tournament is held (a swing is one weekend).

A "top three weekend" in a genre consists in a weekend in which a student competed in one or more tournaments with 10 schools, in an event with 10 contestants and finished first, second or third. (A student who wins three interper events in one weekend has only completed one "top three" weekend in interper; a swing weekend in which a student wins six top three awards in interper counts as only one "top three" weekend.)

Clarification: A semester of interper (for example), therefore, consists in three weekends of interper at tournaments which had 10 or more schools and which held interper events with 10 or more contestants.

Genres: parli debate eligibility counts both parli and policy; policy debate eligibility counts policy debate only; interper includes all five NIET interper events; platform includes CA, Inform and Persuasion; short prep includes Extemp and impromptu.

Exclusions:

Novice: no student with two or more semesters of college experience in a genre can enter novice; no student with three or more top-three weekends (a swing is one weekend) in the genre can enter novice.

Junior: no student with five or more semesters of college experience in a genre may enter junior or novice in that genre. No student with six or more top-three weekends (a swing is one weekend) in that genre can enter novice or junior.

High school experience: a student's high school experience is translated into college experience on this basis. One year of experience in a high school genre is equivalent to no college experience.

Two or more years in a genre (with a semester defined as three tournaments of any size) is equivalent to one college year.

The rules:

Novice: No more than two semesters of experience (see college and high school definitions of experience above) in that genre. No more than three top-three weekends in that genre in college.

Junior: Five or fewer semesters of experience (see college and high school definitions of experience above) in that genre. No more than six top-three weekends in that genre in college.

Open: Open to all

Finally, a Steve Hunt style "aspiration."

"Coaches should aspire to select divisions with an eye towards education, rather than competition. When a student's skill in an event rises significantly, strong consideration should be given to advancing the student to a higher division, even though they may still be technically eligible for a lower division."

PROPOSAL #4: Adopt Chris Bragg and Tiffany Seeley-Case's proposal:  
(SUMMARY)

To us, and we may be terribly wrong, the biggest concern is that the rules are too rigid and that the rigidness gives coaches the excuse to develop their own exceptions (e.g.: Ya, she's won four trophies but one was in a pretty weak tournament so I'll put her in novice). Therefore, coaches are concerned that others are putting students where they don't belong. The only other argument that we recall being forwarded with any frequency concerns the idea that a change in divisions is needed to increase competition. To put it bluntly, we're not convinced. That could be because we are not an NIET school and have a different perspective, but nevertheless the following proposal probably doesn't do a lot to address the concern.

So, if rigidness is truly the problem, then here is our proposal. It is based on the old adage that simpler is better. If we were in charge, the rules would sound something like this....

We begin with an explanation like....

The NFC believes that competition in forensics is one of the most educationally beneficial activities in which one can participate. As a community, we have attempted to create a competitive atmosphere that is above all, a unique and rewarding educational experience for students. We also believe that those best suited to making certain educational decisions for students are their instructors. Therefore, when establishing guidelines for coaches as they prepare to enter their students into competition, and when establishing guidelines for schools that host forensics competitions, we advocate the following: (always keeping in mind that decision should be based on educational success first, and competitive success second)

Or something like that .....followed by...

We believe that there should be novice, junior and senior divisions in both IE's and debate.

In individual Events, students should be evaluated based on their experience and placement in Platform Events, Draw Events and Interp Events separately. However, the guidelines are the same for each genre.

**NOVICE:** The NFC feels that novice divisions in individual events should be reserved for students with little or no high school experience. This is the place for students to gain some experience in college forensics and to learn what the activity is about. Coaches should refrain from placing students with significant high school or college experience in novice divisions.

**JUNIOR:** The NFC feels that junior division should be reserved for students who have a significant amount of high school experience in competitive forensics or have had significant success at the novice levels of college forensics.

**SENIOR:** The NFC feels that students should be moved to or entered in Senior divisions after they have demonstrated proficiency at the Junior level. A demonstration of proficiency might include: consistent breaking into out rounds at large tournaments, consistent success, etc.

Followed by a similar set of guidelines for debate, maybe even breaking up parli and policy.....

**Justification:** This proposal lets coaches put students where they feel they belong...after all, they are the educators. This stops the cry of Rules Violation, because there really is no "rule" to violate. This simplifies things. This makes us have to trust each other...a healthy thing we think.

**Drawbacks:** People can (and probably will) violate the spirit of the guidelines and enter their students based on competitive criteria rather than educational. Our response? We think it will be a minor problem and certainly won't be the rule and, if they want to win that bad, let 'em.

Maybe it's math phobia, but this saves all of the #of trophies at tournaments with a certain # of people in a certain # of events counting that we do now, and in our minds, does nothing to harm the educational value of the activity that we are trying to promote.

**PROPOSAL #5:** I suppose we could adopt some sort of hybrid of these...

Time is counting down to September 7.....I'd REALLY like to iron something out for the meeting, even if we have to do it the night before.....I remember several groans when this got sent to committee followed by "These committees never accomplish anything" mutterings....it would be nice to prove folks wrong and deal with this issue at the same time.

Hope you are all enjoying your summer.

Thanks for all of your help,  
Chris

