

## *Justification of Forensics Repeatability*

Overview: Many of the arguments used to support the repeatability of Athletic team courses and ensemble performance courses also apply to Forensics. The reduction to arts courses in the K-12 system, as mentioned in the “*Recommendations Regarding Repeatability*” (hereafter referred to as *RRR*) are true of Forensics teams in the K-12 system that have had their budgets slashed and their teams canceled. Additionally, the “exposure to the various types of studio art” (*RRR*, p. 4) has tremendous truth in our Forensics courses where students are exposed to 15 different events in which students can discover talents and interests while honing a variety of skills. The arguments in defense of repeatability for intercollegiate athletics depend on regulations of the COA and NCAA. I believe that repeatability is an important issue for athletic teams, but the bylaws of these governing bodies do not explicitly require repeatability. The COA and NCAA do promote an equitable playing field for competing teams, and the competitiveness of California Community teams (forensics included) would be stunted by the removal of repeatability. Although California Community College Forensics teams may be able to weather this storm, many of our programs will be weakened and some will likely disappear. The Following are reasons the repeatability of forensics courses must be maintained.

1. **May Interfere with California’s Transfer Model Curriculum** – In the past year, Speech and Communication departments in our community colleges have designed curriculum that will satisfy statewide standards for an Associate of Arts degree in Speech Communication. The *RRR* demands a redesign and fragmentation of the student learning objectives associated with a forensics course. The “alternate curricular structures” (*RRR*, p. 4) would cast doubt on the compatibility of our forensics courses with the Transfer Model Curriculum. This may create obstacles to a student’s ability to obtain a degree and transfer.
2. **Team Culture & Mentorships:** Students become coaches and mentors in successive semesters. Students also move toward mastery as coaches/teachers. And I would extend this argument further to say that as a team activity, teammates contribute to a positive, supportive, and student-centered team culture. Without repeatability there really are no teammates and there is no sense of team. Additionally, repeatability is necessary if we are to schedule a time/class when the entire team can meet and work together. Schools with multiple forensics coaches may be unaffected, but smaller schools with only 1-2 coaches may face scheduling challenges and not be able to schedule a class in which the team can meet and work together. Because the transfer model curriculum also requires that forensics courses be a minimum of 3 units, this presents forensics instructors with a load problem since we can neither reduce the number of units nor fill 4 different sections (needed to allow students to compete for 2 years). Furthermore, forensics teams represent our schools, and just as we honor and hope to preserve the athletic programs that can keep our students feeling engaged, prideful and represented, so too should we

value the contributions of our academic team activities.

3. **Competitive Fairness** - The competitive season is 1 year long, meaning students can present, develop, and generate new speeches over the course of the whole year (2 semesters). Additionally, the State and National tournaments are offered only in the Spring semester, and students who can develop their speeches over the entire competitive season are given a tremendous advantage over students who only have a single semester. Students also have between 2-4 years of eligibility at virtually every state and national forensics tournament. This is because these organizations recognize that ample practice and experience develop confident and competent communicators. The *RRR* would provide an unfair competitive advantage to students in other states and further advantage students at 4-year colleges. First year students typically do not advance to the national tournament, as they have not yet developed the experiences and skills that promote competitive success. The potential for students to learn and be successful as public speakers is severely limited without repeatability.
4. **Continued Experiential Student Learning:** Although there are craft elements to public speaking, the art is never perfected (and the craft takes more than 2 years). Students require more than a single semester to develop proficiency and mastery of communication skills and techniques. Students are additionally afforded the opportunity to connect with students from other campuses, including 4-year institutions that students might be interested in transferring to. Travel to tournaments allows our students to network with a diversity of students and educators that span the state and nation. This exposure to other regions and cultures enhances the education of our students, stretching their minds to consider other ways of speaking or thinking (the argument here is analogous to that of a student exchange). Often our students have never traveled beyond the city limits, let alone the state line. Because limited team budgets often don't allow students to travel in their 1st semesters, repeatability is necessary if students are to access this beyond the classroom learning. These experiences are particularly valuable for students who cannot afford or don't have time to travel. In addition to meeting people from other schools, students also socialize with their own teammates, and this networking between motivated students can encourage them to stay on track toward their goals.