

***A Report from the President
Sharon Porter
Northern Arizona University***

With the 2003 Championship Tournament, hosted by Jil Freeman, Portland State University, and administered by Robert Trapp and Brian Shipley, Willamette, a wonderful memory, the NPDA focused attention on managing our growth as an organization. That process began with a Summer Developmental Conference held in Prescott, Arizona. 31 participants, representing each NPDA district, reviewed the NPDA Constitution and By-Laws. Issues generated in small groups were brought before the assembly for discussion. The recommendations that survived that process were to go to the membership for ratification.

The proposals generated by the Prescott Conference were distributed to the membership and posted on the NPDA website. Some of the Constitutional issues were discussed at our Miami Business Meeting. Those items went out on a ballot and were unanimously passed. However, the sheer number of proposals necessitated postponing some of the Constitutional issues and all of the By-Law proposals for the NPDA Business Meeting in Northridge.

The Prescott Conference opened with a discussion of whether we wanted to just run a national tournament or whether we wanted to be a professional organization that promoted parliamentary debate. The decision to expand our mission to become a professional organization, and our rapid growth, launched a series of proposals to redesign and strengthen our committee structure. Prior to the Prescott Conference, the NPDA committees consisted of the Executive Council, the Committee on Discrimination and Sexual Harassment, the Elections Committee, the Site Committee, the Finance Committee and the Publications Committee. Although changes in tasks and functions were adopted for the Executive Council, the Committee on Discrimination and Sexual Harassment, the Finance Committee and the Publications Committee, those committees were retained. The name of the Elections Committee was changed to the Nomination Committee to more accurately reflect the charge of the committee. The Site Committee was incorporated under one of the three new committees established. A National Tournament Committee was established to coordinate the functions of the Championship Tournament: administration, rules and standards, site and hosting, research and assessment and topic selection. A Professional Development Committee was established to develop standards for forensic educators and to review ethics and rules of the organization. The third committee, the Outreach Committee, was proposed to coordinate our international, domestic and public relations initiatives. Since the Outreach Committee proposal is being rewritten, that committee is currently functioning as an ad hoc committee.

One proposal, considered at the Northridge Business Meeting, would strengthen the procedure and process of planning our annual budget, providing the membership with the opportunity to vote on line items. Our Sexual Harassment Policy is being reviewed by an attorney and, based on that review, our policy will be modified by the Committee on Discrimination and Sexual Harassment.

Review of our Constitution also indicated the need for decentralization. Consequently, changes were made to 'divest' the Executive Council of their responsibilities for direct tournament administration. In a number of instances, procedures were not clearly established, and some changes were made to correct those oversights. No responsibilities were incorporated in our Constitution for the Journal Editor, the Webmaster, the District Representatives or the Student District Representatives. Those duties were added.

Although it might appear that we have accomplished quite a bit in the last year, there is much more to do. In addition to consideration of an alternative meeting and representation method for accomplishing the business of the organization, an active outreach initiative and a more democratic budget process, we still have a number of By-Law proposals that we will be voting on which would directly affect the future rules and procedures for our Championship Tournament. The NPDA is a vital and growing organization. We have a diverse and talented base of student competitors and forensic educators. We would invite you to become involved and help us be as strong a professional organization as we are a forensic activity.