

Challenges and Opportunities for Forensic Programs Offering Debate and Individual Events

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Introduction

It is difficult to identify with some precision, the date that forensic programs began to specialize in debate or individual events. However, it was a concern over three decades ago when the first developmental conferees met at the Sedalia conference in 1974. Back then, arguing for broad based programs Scott Nobles (1975) said: "Let me challenge all of us to strive to conceptualize the optimum educational program, one with the fullest range of forensics training" (p. 57). His challenge reflected a degree of consensus held by the forensics community at that time. John C. Reinard and John E. Crawford's (1975) "Delphi" study found that forensics programs should be constructed to ensure the provision of a full range of activities: "Individual and debate events should receive equal emphasis in forensics programs and tournaments" (p. 73).

Ten years after the first developmental conference, the consensus regarding broad based programs was less clear. Reading Chapter II, "Rationale for Forensics," one can discern a clear commitment to the educational purposes served by the range of forensics events including debate, public address events, and the oral interpretation of literature. However, in Chapter V, "Strengthening Educational Goals and Programs," the conference participants offered little guidance regarding whether programs should specialize or offer the fullest range of opportunities. In fact, the report of the second national conference on forensics considered recommendations for individual events in a separate chapter. Whether this enhanced the status of programs that specialized in individual events, widened a growing divide between debate and individual events, or both, is not clear. However, since the first and second national developmental conferences, although I am not sure any official records exist, it seems that some programs have continued to feature a primary commitment to a form of debate or individual events, and the number of programs that can claim to serve the vision of offering the full range of forensics training envisioned by Professor Nobles remains limited.

The purpose of this paper is to inquire into the forces that might account for this shift in the focus of programs, to consider some of the values served by broad-based programs, and identify some of the challenges faced by directors of programs that strive to offer opportunities in both debate and individual

events. Despite some sentiment that narrowly focused programs deliver the greatest degree of educational impact for the resources invested, in some instances broad-based programs might play a central role in the educational mission of a department or college. On these grounds, the forensic community should embrace diversity in program development, respect the multifaceted purposes that forensics programs serve, and support a vision of forensics that balances a focus on competitive success with a concern for educational outcomes.

Factors Accounting for Competitive Focus

Three reasons might be considered for program specialization. (1) Programs might have shifted to a primary area of emphasis based on the training and experience of the director. Not every student participates in debate and individual events in high school and college, or receives graduate training from programs that feature both debate and individual events. So some students who choose careers as program directors focus on what they know best based on their experience and training. Generally, programs seem to reflect the training and interest of the director.

(2) Programs are also limited in terms of resources. Tournament travel grows more expensive each year. Traveling students to appropriate tournaments regionally and nationally is costly. Additionally, assuming there is unlimited supply of financial resources, enough coaches or assistants need to be available for coaching or travel. Generally, assistants are working toward a graduate degree so that tournament travel cannot be excessive that progress cannot be made toward one's degree. However, with unlimited financial resources, it would be possible to hire enough coaches to travel extensively. Since few programs have unlimited resources, such a scenario does not reflect the situation for many programs, thus choices must be made about what kind of program to offer.

(3) Academic departments of communication studies shape programs in terms of the control they exert over the evaluation of the director. If a department wants debate opportunities over individual events (or *vice versa*), the director is required to serve that mission. If the department has no expectation other than that the director offer competitive opportunities, the director has far more freedom. Departments that expect competitive success might

encourage programs to narrow their focus while departments that expect directors to ensure that opportunities for competition are available for any interested students including novices, should be pleased with programs that are broadly constructed.

The foregoing discussion yields some questions that help frame an assessment of whether a director should pursue a narrowly focused program versus a broad-based program. What kind of program does the department (or department chair, or any other relevant administrator) want? What kind of a program is the director trained to provide? What kind of a program can a director reasonably provide given the nature of one's duties and obligation as a faculty member or coach? What kind of program can the department or college afford? What kind of an educational experience is intended for students at the institution? These questions suggest that it is less of a conflict between whether broad based programs are desirable compared to narrowly defined programs and more of a question of what makes sense given the resources and constraints of program development within the departmental or college mission statement for the program. Before addressing these questions directly I offer a comparison of what is gained and lost with specialized versus broad-based programs.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Specialized vs. Broad-based Programs

Focusing on either debate or individual events can often maximize the potential for competitive success. Specialization can lead to more detailed preparation in a given area of competitive endeavor. One risk of enhancing competitive preparation is a misplaced overemphasis on competitive success at the expense of other potential educational outcomes.

Focusing on either debate or individual events also can hold off burnout, an on-going challenge for program directors (see McDonald, 2001). Directors and coaches can limit their coaching efforts to one debate topic, one style or format of debate, or to focusing on individual events. Doing so means fewer hours in preparing for and judging at tournaments. Focusing however deprives students of either debate or individual events opportunities. And one could argue that a narrowly focused program focuses demands an intensity of effort that leads to burnout in the same degree as a broad based program.

Focusing on one purpose holds the possibility of creating camaraderie, unification of team purpose, and potentially fewer cultural conflicts between those students who identify with debate rather than individual events (or individual events rather than debate). Students can be motivated by team leaders, can be mentored by varsity competitors as they join the team, and can learn the detailed intricacies of successful competition in focused programs. Similarly, assuming that a program has a director and some

assistants that must divide resources between program goals, singularity of competitive purpose means that there is less conflict over resources devoted to debate or individual events. However, camaraderie is not uniquely developed with an exclusive commitment to debate or individual events. With leadership from directors, team-building exercises can still develop *esprit de corps* for broad based teams. And the cultural differences between debate and individual events can serve as important opportunities for learning about intercultural and interdisciplinary communication practices not to mention pride in the accomplishments of both components of the program.

The development of multiple debate communities poses another set of choices for directors. Presently, a director of forensics has the option of subscribing to team debate focusing on policy propositions by participating in the National Debate Tournament and/or Cross Examination Debate Association debate communities, in team debate over varying forms of propositions in the National Parliamentary Debate Association debate community, in a Lincoln-Douglas debate format on a policy proposition in the National Forensics Association community, and in other forms of debate associated with the National Educational Debate Association and International Public Debate Association (among potential other organizations). Focusing on one form of debate might be necessary given the detailed research and knowledge needed to coach and judge. Tournament travel circuits might impose limits on resources to ensure competitive success. However, while it would seem that debate communities share an interest in the principles of research, case building, refutation, strategy and tactics, important differences might exist between the NPDA, NFA, and NDT/CEDA debate communities. Different topics, formats, preparation time, research burdens, and educational vision might be vital enough for students to benefit from participating in NPDA debate along with NFA LD debate or even possibly team policy debate in NDT/CEDA. Still the travel, coaching, and expenses might make such an extensive commitment difficult for programs.

Most directors have a sense of what is gained and lost from focusing on one form of competition; not all department chairs or administrators always do. What is important to take from this cursory review of advantages and disadvantages is that the gains and losses are important only in relation to whether a program's vision, and by implication, a director's educational vision, is aligned with the interests and needs of the department, college, and university where the program resides and from which it draws support. When a director's educational mission and purpose is at odds with that of the department or college, applying criteria for evaluating program success and the director's contribution

to the educational mission of the department will, presumably, yield an unfavorable judgment.

In summary, limiting the focus of a program can maximize competitiveness, avoid burnout, yield team dynamic benefits in the way of assimilating novice students and uniting a team in a common purpose, strengthen an element of the larger forensics community, and provide administrators and directors with a relatively clear set of criteria for evaluating the level of activity and success in meeting a program's goals. Limiting the focus of a program can misplace an emphasis on competitive success potentially undermining educational outcomes of participating in different events with a team of diverse interests, deprive students of participating in other events that serve their educational interests, perpetuate cultural divides between students of debate versus individual events, and create financial difficulties for a director trying to participate in multiple communities, traveling multiple circuits, and attending multiple national tournaments to close the season.

What advantages and disadvantages are uniquely served by these two types of programs or are the benefits only reflected to a degree by a program? Are the advantages and disadvantages important for the larger forensics community to consider or is this a concern that should be left with a director or department chair? A director that has no interest or expertise in debate will probably not pursue debate activities; the same goes for a director interested only in individual events. A department chair that has no interest in, or knowledge of benefits that a broad based program might offer, or has a limited budget to offer a director, and/or leaves the decision up to the director regarding the nature of the program, might forego a broad based program. Given these circumstances it seems unreasonable to think that a broad based program would be a good idea. So under what circumstances does it make sense to pursue a broad based program?

A Case for Broad Based Programs

(1) Broad-based programs are necessary when communication studies departments tie resources to a forensics program's educational mission. We might assume that presently, or in the future, at some colleges, in some departments, a broad based program would be vital to a department's mission, that the speech and debate program offers important opportunities for students to learn about principles of speech through a competitive format and showcase a college's most dedicated and talented students (McBath, 1984). If that is a reasonable assumption, we should ensure that there are models where such a program exists so that directors hired to serve that departmental mission have access to experiences in directing broad based programs, that there is some body of professional literature that addresses the

concerns as well as the benefits of broad based programs, and that the professional organizations continue to work on documents that describe criteria for evaluating program directors with varying responsibilities.

(2) Additionally, broad based programs are essential to providing training to individuals who choose careers in secondary education. Programs that specialize reduce options for participating in some events. While that can maximize the competitive success for some students, not all students are able to compete at such a level of intensity. Not every student who joins a forensic program can win a national championship with enough hard work. Some students have family, social, employment, and academic interests and obligations that compete with tournament travel. Some students prepare their events in earnest because of what they learn about the process of preparing for competition so that they are better prepared for directing their own speech programs. In these circumstances, emphasizing competitive success through focused effort on only individual events or debate can limit the experiences, the training, and hence the quality of preparation for a student who might take on the job of directing a broad based program at the secondary level. Broad based forensic programs provide a vital element of training for those who will recruit and train succeeding generations of forensic competitors as they transition from high school to college competition. And this training might be essential to the curriculum and program offerings in secondary education for some departments.

(3) Broad-based programs maintain a healthy diversity of speech event offerings to students. Novice students who try debate and find it less than optimally satisfying can try limited preparation events. After trying limited preparation events, students might decide they prefer speaking in situations where they have greater control over the message and take up informative speaking, persuasive speaking, or rhetorical criticism. If they are not terribly interested in platform events, they can try interpretation events in studies of poetry, prose, or dramatic literature. None of these options precludes a student from specializing at some point in their career to maximize their competitive potential. Without the options, however, students are left with either fitting in to the debate world or not, fitting into the individual events world or not. Perhaps they might find their way to the Model United Nations group or a university's local chapter of the Roosevelt Institution or enroll in a Theatre or English literature course or audition for a production, or find some other organization where communication skills are essential. I am not arguing that resourceful students with some sense of initiative cannot find a student organization or a program on campus to address their interests. What I am concerned about is that if we neglect to

accommodate students' interests due to continued specialization, we risk an on going contraction of the forensics community. Can the probability of this risk be estimated reliably and can the impact of specialization be calculated with some degree of precision at this point in a survey of the forensics community's health? Probably not. Yet given my more than thirty years of experience in speech and debate activities, I think the concern is worth expressing and that the leaders of the forensics community consider how program design and development might affect the overall health of forensics activities for the future.

(4) Broad based programs also seem more conducive to nurturing an interest in experimentation with new events. Recommendations from the second national developmental conference concluded that new events, formats, and other innovations were important to consider (see recommendation numbers 24, 26, & 29, pp. 44-45). The National Forensic Association has been committed to this idea over the last couple of decades in trying new events (Argument Criticism, Biographical Informative, Argumentative Interpretation, Editorial Impromptu, are examples among others). Pi Kappa Delta has offered a national comprehensive tournament that offers almost every kind of debate, individual, duo, and group event that has some degree of interest in the forensic community, as well as experimental events (for example, "To Honor Women," "To Honor Native Americans"). The breadth, innovation, and novelty of conceptualizing, discussing, and trying new events is important for the educational mission of the forensic community. It might be the case that broad based programs are more adept in adapting to these opportunities and seem to reap greater awards from these opportunities than the more narrowly circumscribed programs that focus on either individual events or debate exclusively.

(5) Broad based programs would seem to serve career needs of students who choose to major in communication studies at the undergraduate level. For example, consider the skills employers seek in Appendix A. One could argue that debate activities serve the broad category of communication skills in the areas of presentation skills, verbal skills, writing skills, reading skills, and data analysis skills. Also, one could reasonably argue that debate contributes to the development of interpersonal influence skills. Finally, one could argue that debate contributes to the development of problem-solving skills in the areas of reasoning, analysis, research skills, and decision-making skills. However, if a student also participated in individual events, some of these skills might be developed while others might not. For example, in some debate communities, presentation skills seem less valued than research, reasoning, and reading skills. Interpersonal skills might be only minimally considered in the development of a team; and although not necessarily excluded from consid-

eration in a program devoted solely to debate activities, might not receive the same degree of emphasis in a program that offered opportunities for students interested in both debate and individual events. It might be very difficult to say with some degree of exactitude which skills and to what degree each are developed by a program strictly devoted to debate or individual events. Evidence exists for both the value of debate training (Littlefield, 2001; Matlon & Keele, 1984; Williams, McGee, & Worth, 2001) and for the value of forensic participation, in general, as having the greatest impact in developing communication skills compared to other various methods of communication instruction (Allen, Berkowitz, Hunt, & Loudon, 1999). Whether a broad based program would deliver more return on a variety of the skills listed than an investment of resources devoted to only one half of the forensic world in the way of either debate or individual events is still an open question.

(6) Broad based programs seem important to maintaining the diversity of knowledge of forensic educational practices. However, this claim is difficult to assess since there are risks and benefits to a vision of forensics that emphasizes specialization as well as broad based opportunities; and neither vision seems possible to evaluate empirically without overcoming substantial challenge in research design. If graduate programs specialize in debate or individual events, they are best positioned to produce graduate professionals whose experience, training, and formal graduate education reflect a decision to focus on either debate or individual events. That presents little difficulty for graduate students who seek to direct programs upon graduation if they have had undergraduate experience in the side of forensics that their graduate programs ignored, and seek jobs where the department had indicated an interest or commitment in a broad based program. However, from the standpoint of professional training, if programs tend to specialize at the undergraduate level, and at the graduate level, one result might be a relatively narrow set of options for graduate school training, a kind of narrow path of program options for graduate school after the undergraduate experience. This might not necessarily be an undesirable development, however, in the sense that professional training might become more rigorous, more sophisticated, and more specialized due to the narrow focus on the graduate training experience. What might become problematic, however, is the fact that such an evolution of professional training opportunities detracts from a consideration of preparation for directing broad based programs. Again, this effect is only negative if available jobs ask for training in broad based programs.

(7) Broad based programs also serve to check, to some degree, the development of self-contained cultural practices that tend to disconnect some forensic

practices from real world communication practices. In some debate communities, presentation skills seem less valued than research and verbal reading of evidence. In some individual events communities, nonverbal elements of appearance or vocal qualities seem more valued than a well-researched argument. Representatives from either community can deny these general criticisms (among others than are occasionally leveled), but in too many instances, the competitive culture of either emphasis can place greater value or less value on practices that would be regarded as somewhat limited in the real world, the one that exists beyond our tournaments after our students graduate. Both the first and second national development conferences condemned competitive debate practices that James McBath (1984) argued, "subverted the essential character of the activity."

The first Developmental Conference, concluding that "tournament debate should be an enterprise in the comparative communication of arguments," noted that debate is not an exercise in the rapid recitation of bits of evidence, erroneously known as "information processing." Sedalia conferees condemned such practices as the presentation of material at a rate too fast for most listeners to comprehend, the tactic of deliberately presenting more pieces of information or minor points than opponents can absorb, the use of verbal shorthand that obfuscates the clarity of argument; the infrequency of explanations among evidence, inferences and conclusions; and the relative rarity of discussions of value assumptions. It is noteworthy that the volume reporting the conference was entitled *Forensics as Communication*. Not as logic, or evidence, or gamesmanship, and certainly not as information processing—but as communication. Now, ten years later, the Evanston conferees reaffirmed the primacy of communication in forensics, sharply criticizing tournament practices that subvert the essential character of the activity. (p. 8)

Similarly, the second conference offered a number of recommendations for individual events programs in an attempt to prevent tournaments from becoming closed enclaves of narrowly constructed competitive experiences (see Chapter V, pp. 37-48). Assuming directors can maintain the conversation between students who choose to participate in either side or both of the forensic worlds, the communication practices of both cultures might inform the other in positive ways. For example, the sophistication of research practices shared by debaters might enhance the logical appeal of a persuasive speech while a sharing of delivery skills might help a debater to convey a more professional image as an advocate. In this respect, I am not arguing against specialization

only against the cultural practices that seem to have little use beyond the tournament format and would seem silly in the real world, and for the appropriate rather than caricatured application of practices that each type of program holds dear and refines in great detail in the pursuit of competitive success.

Challenges Facing Broad Based Programs

Challenges facing broad based programs might be grouped into three basic categories: (1) resources; (2) educational mission; (3) informed professional practices. These are probably not the only challenges facing the forensic community but they should serve as a starting point for framing discussions about how to maintain the option of offering broad-based programs should they be justified. The following sections identify these challenges and offer some potential solutions.

Resources

Broad based programs are always strapped for resources. They need money to fund an extensive travel schedule, time to coach, and people to coach those students the director cannot find the time to coach. To address this problem, colleges should increase resources or clarify the goals and expectations of the program so that there is not a mismatch of resources with program activities. Additionally, it is up to us, the "professionals" to continue to work on documents that detail the professional expectations of directors so that they might be evaluated fairly in their pursuit of tenure and promotion in the academy. Impoverished programs cannot sustain the professional commitment to high quality educational experiences, risk disappointment on the part of students who are deprived of national travel schedules, and risk burnout on the part of directors who seek to do more with less time and resources.

Educational Mission

A number of folks have recognized the tension between the educational objectives of forensics and the effects of the drive for competitive success (Burnett, Brand, & Meister, 2001; Burnett, Brand, & Meister 2003; Hinck, 2003). When the balance between education and competition is disrupted, participation becomes focused almost exclusively on winning. Students and directors can easily forget that the purpose of hosting tournaments is to create motivation for preparing excellent messages; the tournament becomes an end to itself. When this imbalance occurs, conversations about forensics get framed in terms of competitive success rather than educational outcomes and students as well as directors seek approval and acknowledgement more in terms of competitive success than educational outcomes. A kind of elitism arises that serves to instantiate some programs and practices with more status than others. While it is impossible to avoid hierarchy given the role of competition in our practices, re-

maintaining mindful of the tensions might minimize some of the more dividing effects.

Not every program can offer scholarships, recruit the best high school competitors year after year, and have what appear to less well-funded programs, unlimited resources. Some programs are funded in very modest ways by universities already facing budget cuts serving some students who are novices, are participating in forensics as a program requirement for a degree in secondary education, or simply elected to compete at the college level because their high school experience had been a positive one. If competitive success overshadows our vision of forensics, broad based programs will seem to be suboptimal investments of resources. As an educational community, we should remain mindful of the role broad based programs play in serving students who seek to gain the educational benefits of forensics.

Additionally, we should be clear about what we are trying to accomplish in terms of designing an educational experience for our students. Obviously, if the only criterion for evaluation was competitive success, we could neglect other measures of evaluation, add up the awards won by our students, and call it an education. Evidently, that was less than adequate as a statement of purpose leading up to the 1974 developmental conference on forensics. Scott Nobles (1975) identified three purposes for conference attendees over three decades ago:

1. We must develop a better notion of who we are and of our central purposes. We must answer such basic questions as: What is forensics? What are its educational goals? What is the role of the forensics professional?
2. We must develop and encourage the best approaches possible to filling our most constructive professional roles and for achieving our central educational goals.
3. We must develop ways to explain and promote our work, both within and without the academic establishment.

Ten years later, the forensics community was still confronted with the need to describe and explain what its mission was as evidenced by the need for an opening chapter in the conference proceedings that offered a "Rationale for Forensics." Education remains an overarching rationale for speech and debate activities. However, the problem now—thirty-four years later—seems more an issue of clarifying values, aligning them with educational practices, and pursuing a well articulated vision of communication education through forensics activities. Therefore, program directors need to consider the relationship between the practices pursued in preparing for competition and the values their practices serve.

Assuming we are trying to design an educational experience—as opposed to a merely competitive experience with some potential educational outcome—we might continue to strive to bring to the forefront the values and objectives we hold for students who participate in debate and individual events, and to demonstrate the ways in which forensic activities achieve these goals. More specifically, to the extent that different forensic communities exist if not only in the way of travel schedules, but also in the way of what count as acceptable practices, we should strive to identify and respect the practices that are unique to or at the core of an educational community's vision. Forensics communities organize around practices and values. To clarify the need for matching values and practice, I would like to turn to an example of how values and practices can conflict when students, judges, coaches, and directors are distracted from an educational purpose by concerns with competitive success.

At its inception, NFA Lincoln-Douglas debate was envisioned as a style of debate that balanced research with communication skills. NDT and CEDA debate practices had evolved to feature highly technical argument strategies that seemed to be valued more than delivery skills that might appeal to a less specialized audience (and a set of practices that some conferees at the first and second conference criticized as undermining the communication emphasis of forensics). Although I cannot document in any kind of systematic way the degree to which debate practices from other communities have found their way into NFA Lincoln-Douglas debate, the rate of delivery and complexity of the debates have increased so much that I fear the NFA debate community is losing its identity as an educational community of students interested in a form of debate that balances argumentation and communication skills. The result is a process of evolution in practices that resemble the NDT and CEDA debate communities' practices. I am not sure this is a desirable result despite the fact that fourteen years ago at the Northwestern conference, conferees were concerned about the fragmentation of the forensic community with the increasing number of forensic organizations (Ziegelmueller, 1984). It is difficult to assess how problematic the fragmentation might be at this point in the history of forensics education. However, if forensic educators are organizing around distinct educational values and practices, and if those values offer something in the way of an educational experience that cannot be addressed as well in other forensic communities, fragmentation might be greeted as a positive way in which differential values are actualized in practice.

Rather than defending any one community or set of debate practices as more desirable than others, I prefer to argue that the more choices we have regarding what educational values are emphasized in a

given forensic community, the stronger the larger forensics community will be for the variations in skills each community offers. However, to maintain some degree of variability, coaches, judges, and directors need to be aware of the differences, willing to value the diversity in community advocacy practices, and most importantly, dedicated to respecting those differences as one moves among debate and/or individual events communities. Under such circumstances, competitive success would be subordinated to educational values in the respective sub-communities of the larger forensics community.

Informed Professional Practices

The question of what kind of program is best will remain a difficult one to answer until we have more data to assess the kind of educational experience each provides. Toward that end, the forensics community needs a renewed effort to document the type and range of programs offered in the United States, degree of participation, and achievements over each academic year and season. The larger forensics community is composed of a number of organizations that have established traditions and historical records of educational activities. While some attempts have been made at self-study (Matlon & Keele, 1984; Stepp & Gardner, 2001), the occasional surveys can often be distracting when conducted at tournaments, are not always sponsored by the leadership of organizations, are not consistently conducted over the years, utilize varying methodologies and measurements, and do not always seem to reflect coordinated efforts between the various forensic organizations. Thus, it is difficult to ascertain with consistent data and criteria over the last few decades whether the number of programs--specialized or broad based--are increasing or declining, whether the number of student participants are increasing or declining, whether the number of novice students served by collegiate programs are increasing or declining, or whether the number of students attending national tournaments is increasing or declining. Nor can forensic community leaders determine how many programs engaged in service activities on campus, service-learning activities in the community, or what the range of those service activities was, or how many students participated--features that might normally be associated with broad-based programs versus specialized programs. An on-going collection of program data regarding the nature of programs, degree of participation, range of activities including service, collected across organizations, and conducted in a way that would describe accurately the extent of our activities, would provide forensic professionals with data needed to assess the health, diversity, and achievements of forensics in the United States. Such data would also complement claims that forensic programs constitute value added experiences for student participants interested in pur-

suating a high quality education at any given institution of higher learning. In the discussions that ensued in the plenary session of this conference, it was noted that some efforts are currently underway in addressing these concerns. It is my hope that these efforts continue, are supported, and adapted to the needs of the forensic community in the future.

Conclusion

This paper has considered the pressures that push programs to specialize in speech and debate activities, identified some of the issues directors and administrators face in developing specialized or broad-based programs, and advanced a rationale for broad-based programs based on an educational mission for forensic activities. Specialized and broad-based programs have advantages and disadvantages for students and directors. The central question facing directors concerns what kind of an educational vision they have for their students and how well that educational vision fits the program needs of the department or college they serve. Regardless of what kind of program a director chooses to develop, at this point in time, given the concerns advanced in this paper, it seems important to ensure that training opportunities, professional literature, and model programs remain available for directors who are charged with providing broad-based programs to their students.

Appendix A

Top Ten Skills Employers Seek

- Awareness of Organizational Purpose
 - Business Acumen
 - Commercial Awareness
 - Role of the Non-Profit Organization in a Community
- Communication Skills
 - Presentation Skills
 - Verbal Skills
 - Writing Skills
 - Reading Skills
 - Data Analysis Skills
- Interpersonal Skills
 - Negotiation
 - Persuasion
 - Influence
- Teamwork and Group Interaction Skills
- Leadership and Management Skills
- Organizational and Planning Skills
- Problem-Solving Skills
 - Reasoning

Creativity
Analytical Ability
Research Skills
Decision-making Skills

Flexibility and Adaptability

Knowing How to Learn

Willingness to Learn New Tasks
Curiosity About Your Job, Organization, and Business
Ability to Grow in Your Knowledge of Your Job

Self-management Skills

Confidence
Internally motivated
Responsible
Capable of Setting Priorities
Ability to Meet Deadlines
Ability to Work Under Pressure
Committed to Your Job
Multicultural Sensitivity
Ability to Handle Personal Problems

The list was derived from the following sources obtained from the internet on 5/16/08:

<https://intranet.londonmet.ac.uk/studentservices/careers/current/becomemoreemployable/uwew.cfm>
<http://www.psychwww.com/careers/skills.htm>
http://www.quintcareers.com/printable/job_skills_values.html
<http://www.backtoworkcoaching.com/EmployersWant.htm>

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