
AN OVERVIEW OF THE BRADLEY SUMMER FORENSICS INSTITUTE

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The 1988 edition of the Summer Forensics Institute (SFI) at Bradley University attracted over 200 students from 15 states. The SFI is now national in scope as enrollment continues to increase each year. Students spend two weeks each summer developing and improving their skills at both oral interpretation and public address. This paper gives a brief overview of the Bradley SFI including the schedule of activities, goals, learning experiences, resources, and evaluation of SFI.

Bradley's SFI consists of two, two-week sessions averaging approximately 100 students each session. The week starts by giving students an overview of all the individual events and their rules followed by a tour of the library. Oral interpretation students are asked to prepare a three minute sample of their best performance for presentation to the interpretation staff on the first night. This provides the staff with some orientation as to the experience level of the student and allows a better assignment of students to coaches by experience level. The public address students meet in their respective event areas for event meetings and topic selection.

For the next four days (Tuesday-Friday) morning sessions are devoted to general theoretical principles of oral interpretation or public address. Students attend the general session which coincides with their event. The oral interpretation meetings discuss such elements as character development, analysis of literature, and the writing of introductions while the public address sessions include lectures on organization, logical and emotional appeals and delivery.

Afternoons are devoted to individual event meetings and small group work and evenings include more individualized coaching. The weekend is a crucial

time in the institutes schedule because this is the point where speech drafts and interpretation cuttings must be completed. It is also a time where students can enjoy themselves during some of our scheduled social activities.

Week two provides more individualized coaching and videotaping. Most students are videotaped at the end of the creative process as a "polishing" or summative experience.

The climax of the SFI is the two-day festival where students perform their events in at least four rounds, receiving at least twelve ballots from the staff. Students are not ranked and there are no event winners. Ballots contain rankings of superior, excellent, good, fair, and unprepared. The student's experience level is taken into consideration when evaluating each student. Students are encouraged to take their ballots home for discussion and evaluation with their respective coaches.

The SFI attempts to attain various goals for its students. First, the SFI attempts to broaden the student's theoretical knowledge in oral interpretation or public address through its various general sessions and individualized coaching. Speeches are not written by the coaching staff and interpretative cuttings are not handed to the students. The finished performance should be the student's own work with guidance from the individual coach.

Another goal is for every student to have individualized coaching every day. We encourage SFI coaches to work at least two hours with each of their students each day.

Finally, the student should have an event performance ready for the festival. This performance will vary based upon the experience level of the student but the overall philosophy communicated to students is "Is this the best performance I can give at this point in time?" If the student can answer "Yes" no matter what their experience level they have achieved their individual goal.

College, high school, and student coaches are the personnel of the SFI staff. This past summer's staff included the four Bradley faculty coaches, one high school coach from Illinois, Indiana, and California, and a visiting coach from Eastern Michigan University. Twenty Bradley speech team members were involved as individual session coaches. Students have the opportunity to work with both professional faculty members and student coaches. Student coaches are selected based upon their involvement with the Bradley Speech Team and their peer coaching throughout the season.

Another resource is the availability of videotaping as a summative evaluation tool. Students also have access to Bradley library and the Peoria public library.

One must remember that the Bradley SFI is only an extension of the high school coach and program. The SFI may be viewed in the same manner as an internship at the college level. The SFI allows the student to experience new

people and ideas but it does not take the place of a high school coach. Numerous SFI students have achieved excellence at both the state and national level. Some eventually achieve success at Bradley or other institutions of higher learning. The SFI continues to grow in numbers, but more importantly, it continues to be dynamic as the staff evaluates the program and investigates new methods for providing students with one of the best experiences of its kind.

BRADLEY SFI FACT SHEET

WHO CAN ATTEND? Any high school student or entering high school freshman in the top half of his or her class. Students must complete an application form and include letters of recommendation. Call 309-677-2354 if your high school does not receive a spring mailing.

WHAT HAPPENS? Two weeks featuring an emphasis on individualized training for speech students.

WHERE? Students stay in Williams dorm at Bradley University. There are male and female floors with dorm cerfews and "lights-out" by 11:30 pm. Students eat two meals at the Student Center Cafeteria and one meal at a local restaurant. Restaurants are within one block of campus and coaches accompany students to this meal.

HOW MANY? There is an average of 100 students per session. Students are encouraged to apply for the first session in mid-July which usually has less enrollment. There is a one-to-five ratio of coaches to students.

WHEN? First session starts in mid-July and the second session starts the first Sunday of August.