

TAKING STEPS FROM DENVER 2001 A REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT

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It's a measure of the vitality of NPDA that, despite a rapid publishing turnaround time, much of what is written here could be old news by the time you are reading it. A lot is being discussed, and a lot is happening.

The National Championship Tournament 2002 is in good hands. Tournament Director Dr. Jack Rhodes and Host Scott Gratson, together with other experienced NPDA leaders, are meeting in Denver as I write this, already engaged in the process of fine tuning plans. Knowing the people involved, we can expect not only a smooth and efficient competition, but we should be surprised if there are no surprises. 2002 in Denver will be fun to look forward to, and fun to attend.

The wisdom of the organization shown in its votes last spring to separate the office of president from that of tournament director, and to establish a number of working committees, is already becoming apparent. Confident in Jack and Scott's tournament planning, I've enjoyed a luxury unavailable to any of my predecessors. I've been able to turn my attention to NPDA's progress in areas beyond the tournament, gathering many of our organization's willing and able for service on the new committees, and gathering ideas from our visionary leaders for determining directions in which NPDA can grow. It is important that NPDA become, for its members, much more than just a national tournament.

In accordance with our Bylaws, we now have a five-person Committee on Discrimination and Sexual Harassment, chaired by Jeff Edwards of Berkeley, to develop educational programs for the membership, and to respond to possible situations at the tournament.

An Elections Committee, chaired by Skip Rutledge of Point Loma Nazarene, will further systematize our processes of nominating officers, and conducting votes on persons and issues.

A Site Committee of seven members, led by NPDA Treasurer Brent Northup, of Carroll, will solicit, encourage, and advise would-be tournament hosts. Their goal is to restore lead time for tournament planning to at least two or three years.

A Finance Committee of three is helping and advising Treasurer Northup, who chairs this group. They are undertaking to position NPDA as a tax exempt organization, and eventually to create and manage a foundation, proceeds from which can support a new range of NPDA projects.

The Publications Committee, led by NPDA Executive Secretary Renea Gernant, of Concordia, boasts the largest membership as well as the most diverse range of tasks. Its 10 members will not only support the NPDA journal editor and the NPDA webweaver, but they will also explore how to provide information for schools and coaches starting new NPDA programs, materials for training both coach and non-professional judges, and methods for expanding the organization's public relations outreach. This committee might well be subdividing itself into various working groups before long. Its potential is exciting.

In addition, I've appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on Gender Diversity in Debate, nine members led by Susan Hellbusch, of Crieghton. Their work promises to provide us more information than we have ever had on this important issue, along with possible proposals for policy changes.

Two exciting areas lie outside the direct concern of any single committee, one of them the expanding opportunities for international involvement. Certainly NPDA wants to continue developing its relationships with traditional European debating organizations, most notably those in Ireland, Scotland, and England. But further east, a cascade of new, mutually beneficial opportunities has appeared in former Soviet republics and in Central Asia. In these countries, school debate is seen as instrumental in creating a new generation attuned to the open exchange of ideas essential to democracy. We of the NPDA are in an excellent position to support them.

Finally, ferment continues regarding how we do parliamentary debate. Robert Trapp, of Willamette, on this issue undertakes to justify its existence by placing it firmly in the realm of public discourse. This, together with my own attempt to articulate the special values that inhere in our activity, and their practical implications, should inspire many an animated discussion among us as parliamentary debate, and the NPDA, continue to grow.