Assessment, 2014 and Strategic Plan, 2018-2023 (years 6-10)

TCU Forensics
Purpose
The purpose of this long-range plan is to position TCU Forensics for both competitive success on a national level, and to ensure its long-term place in the College of Communication.

Mission
TCU Forensics is a comprehensive forensics program that fosters learning through friendly and ethical competition in public speaking, debate, and oral interpretation events. We believe in the educational value of forensics. Through practice and competition, students learn articulate citizenship, self-expression, research, and critical thinking skills.

Foundations and Philosophies
The foundation upon which a new forensics program is built during the first few years of existence is of vital importance to the long-term sustainability of the program. The information that follows outlines the philosophical direction of TCU Forensics.

Epistemic goals
TCU Forensics is wholly committed to nurturing a program that promotes the educational value of forensic activities. This vision of forensics instills in students an appreciation of oration, rhetoric, theory, argumentation, and persuasion that are practiced in a competitive setting. Incorporating a heuristic approach that treats competition as applied rhetorical theory grounds forensic activities soundly within the communication discipline, ensuring both competitive success and longevity. Through participation in TCU Forensics, students learn advanced argumentation and persuasive theory, study rhetorical theory and classical rhetoric, and treat competition as experiential learning; tournaments are experienced as a place to practice the rhetorical skills learned and apply the research accomplished in a setting that encourages networking and friendly competition.

Comprehensive Program
TCU Forensics is operated as a comprehensive program, inclusive of debate, limited preparation, public address, and oral interpretation. TCU Forensics attaches equal value to both debate and individual events as part of a larger heuristic approach. Students are encouraged to compete in all areas of forensic activities with the understanding that each form of applied rhetorical practice enriches understanding of the others. Debaters learn to select literature that makes a significant social argument and cut it for oral interpretation in a manner that coaxes the argument from the text for an audience. Interpretation competitors learn empathy and immediacy with an audience that enhances their delivery and persuasive appeal to an audience in debate and public address. Extemporaneous and impromptu speakers learn critical thinking skills that are critical to both debate and public address. TCU Forensics competitors will learn how the various areas of forensic rhetoric correlate, and learn to see forensic discourse as a whole. This holistic view treats forensic activity as applied rhetorical theory.
Assessment: Years 1-2 (FY 2014-FY 2015)

During the first two years of since initiation of the TCU Forensics strategic plan, the program has met and exceeded all goals. Below is a detailed list of the goals of the strategic plan for the first years, and an assessment of progress toward each.

Year 1 Goals

- **Adopt a team constitution.** This goal was achieved in the Fall of 2013. The team passed a ratified a constitution that governs team election processes and operations.

- **Elect team officers.** Team officers were elected in the Fall of 2013, and again in the Fall of 2014. Per the ratified constitution, team offices include a President, Vice-President, Administrative Officer, and Extemporaneous Speaking Chairperson. Election of team officers gives legitimacy to student leadership, and provides students a stake in the governance of their team. Officer positions and their duties are governed by the team constitution. In the first two years, these officer positions have been both successfully elected, and successfully implemented. Student officers have served as mentors to their peers, and assistants to the director of the program. These student leaders have been instrumental in creating and maintaining team culture.

- **Establish National Affiliations.** The TCU Forensics program has reactivated the Texas Zeta Chapter of Pi Kappa Delta, and attended the National Comprehensive Tournament in Indianapolis, Indiana in 2014. The team was recognized for four debate team “breaks” into national quarter-finals, and one into the semi-final round. The team achieved three national individual event quarter-final breaks at this tournament also. The team has also established membership in the National Forensics Association and attended the 2014 NFA National Championship Tournament in Ypsilanti, Michigan. As members of the National Parliamentary Debate Association, the team has been successful at having tournaments on the TCU campus sanctioned for national qualification by the NPDA.

- **Recruit qualified students at TCU.** This goal has been both met and exceeded. Team size for year two is at the expected level for years 3-5. During the Fall 2014 semester, the team consists of 18 students from varied majors and backgrounds.

- **Increase team visibility through public relations strategies.** The team has engaged in several public relations strategies including:
  - The team website, [www.forensics.tcu.edu](http://www.forensics.tcu.edu) is now operational and updated frequently. News stories are placed on the page after every tournament.
  - News releases and coverage. The team has worked with TCU 360 to gain coverage of team events including public debates, tournaments, and events hosted at TCU.
  - Team schedule posters were professionally designed and printed for the 2014-2015 season. These posters have garnered a high level of attention, and students report being recognized in the community from their images on these posters.
A team showcase event was hosted in conjunction with the Department of Communication Studies in Spring 2014. The team gained visibility by hosting the Irish Debaters in April 2014. This public debate was an important event for team culture, visibility, and integration into the TCU community. The team has active social networking pages on both Facebook and Twitter that are used to update and live Tweet tournaments and events.

- **Engage in regional and national competition.** During the first two years, TCU Forensics has not only met, but exceeded competitive goals. In the second year, the team has regularly won not just individual, but team sweepstakes awards at regional tournaments in both debate and individual events. These team awards, particularly combined debate and individual event team awards, indicate that the team is achieving success as a comprehensive program in all areas of oration.

- **Establish norms for the extemporaneous speaking squad.** Norms have been both established and refined. The team now engages in weekly filing sessions that are monitored by a student leader, the Extemporaneous Speaking Chairperson. Students are each assigned one or two news sources, and take responsibility for filing everything of news value. Filing, practice, and competitive norms have been established, and have led to several awards for the TCU extemporaneous squad, including regular placement of multiple members of the TCU squad in the top six at regional tournaments.

- **Encourage broad and comprehensive competition.** This goal has been met and exceeded. Students on the TCU team compete in debate and at least two individual events each. The team now has multiple students competing in all available individual events.

- **Expand recruiting and team size.** In the second year, this goal has been met and exceeded. Recruiting efforts through class visits, the student organizations fair, and campus advertising have helped the team grow to its current size of 18 members.

- **Expand competitive goals.** In the second year, competitive goals have both broadened and deepened. Competitors are engaging in higher-level discourse, and are achieving higher rankings at tournaments than in the first year. The team has achieved several individual and team awards in the Fall 2014 semester, and looks forward to a successful spring.

- **Host a collegiate tournament.** TCU Forensics will host the Fall Texas Intercollegiate Forensics Association tournament in November 2014, and the It’s Not 30-Below Swing with the University of Kentucky in January 2015. The January event is a “swing” tournament, a pair comprehensive debate/individual event tournaments hosted by two partnering schools in one weekend. Partnering with a host offers two tournaments to attendees to maximize their travel budgets (norm for forensic tournaments is a swing), and serves to ally TCU with other programs in the nation. Tournament hosting, particularly with a hosting partner, increases the TCU program’s visibility on the national circuit and legitimizes the program as a national-level team.

- **In the coming years: 3-5.** TCU Forensics looks forward to continuing to grow and achieve competitive success. Following the success of the Irish Debate, the team plans to bid to host other traveling international debate teams including the British and Japanese Debate Teams. The team will engage in a public commemorative debate with Wiley College in March 2014. Such public events are planned for all future years.
Goals: Year 7-10 (FY 2020-2022)
In the seventh year, main goal will be maintenance of team momentum. As the team moves toward a nationally competitive status, maintenance of team competitive ability and culture will be essential. By the seventh year, team culture and expectations should be fully established. The seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth years are about maintenance. Maintenance will include:

• **Attending more out-of-district tournaments** to expose students to additional viewpoints and paradigms. Competitive norms and judging paradigms vary greatly across national districts. National success requires TCU students to be able to understand these varying norms, and learn to persuade all audiences. This requires competition at tournaments outside the regular season district. In years 1-5, the team has traveled to out-of-district tournaments in Missouri and Kentucky. In later years, travel to national preview tournaments such as the Norton or the Hell Froze Over Swing at Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois, or tournaments in the Northwest or East Coast regions will become necessary to maintaining national prowess.

• **Consistent coaching** will be a necessity to maintenance of a comprehensive program operating at this level. A second faculty position to assist with team administration and coaching may be considered by this point in team progress.

• **Hosting high school camps and clinics** will help increase visibility on the high school circuit. This will assist with recruiting efforts, and serves to connect TCU Forensics to the larger forensics community. TCU Forensics operates under the belief that every program is a steward of the activity, and thus responsible for contributing to the health of forensic activities at every level. Offering high school camps and clinics allows TCU to give back to the forensics community, and share knowledge with the high school circuit.

• **Expand campus outreach** by increasing the number of public debates on campus. By the seventh year, TCU Forensics will be situated well to begin a Debate Union, a team of debaters who do not necessarily travel to competitions, but offer on-campus monthly debates. The Debate Chamber in Scharbauer Hall offers an outlet for such public discourse, and lends itself to becoming the home of monthly debates on issues that affect TCU and the Fort Worth community. A Debate Union offers students who cannot commit to competition a means to learn argumentation and public oration in a non-competitive public setting. In addition to student debates, a Debate Union would host guest debaters from the community and campus. The move toward a dual forensics program and debate union grounds TCU Forensics in the academic community and the communication discipline. TCU Forensics would promote and market monthly Union debates through the team website, invitations, news releases, and class announcements. Topics for monthly debates would be determined with input from the campus community and potential guest debaters.
TCU Forensics 2014-2015 Travel Schedule

- Texas A&M, College Station, TX
- John Brown U, Siloam Springs, AR
- Wiley College, Marshall, TX
- Texas State, San Marcos, TX

NFA National Tournament
- Pi Kappa Delta National Tournament

- The Great Debaters vs. TCU
- Sweetheart Swing
- Spring TFA

- Southern Forensic Championship
- The Great Debaters
- It's Not 30 Below Swing
- Fall TFA

- Golden Eagle Invitational
- Bluegrass Invitational
- Argentina Debate on a Plane
- Hill Country Swing

- 4/16-4/20
- 3/4-3/8
- 3/18
- 2/13-2/15
- 2/6-2/8
- 1/30-2/1
- 1/23
- 1/16-1/18
- 10/31-11/2
- 10/24-10/26
- 10/10-10/11
- 9/26-9/28
- 9/19-9/20
During the Fall 2014 semester, the team has achieved several notable honors including many top-3 finishes for individual competitors. Tournament sweepstakes awards measure the overall success of each team at any given tournament. Students earn points toward sweepstakes for every preliminary round in which they place first, second, or third amongst six competitors. Points are also given for a win in debate. Larger point totals are awarded for placing in a final round. A combined sweepstakes award measures points from both debate and individual events, and the champions of the combine sweepstakes awards are considered the winners of the tournament.

TCU Forensics won first place in combined sweepstakes at the Golden Eagle Invitational at John Brown University in Siloam Springs, Arkansas in October, 2014. It is notable that at this tournament, TCU also had four of the top five individual sweepstakes winners (TCU won first, second, fourth, and fifth places). These awards combine all points the individual student earns in both individual events and debate, and are very difficult to win. Students must be well-rounded competitors who excel at all areas of competition, competing in debate, public address, and oral interpretation.
Public Debates

TCU Forensics is committed to hosting public debates to engage the TCU community in a culture of public discourse. The team has hosted a large public debate every year, and plans to continue this tradition.

In October, 2012, the team hosted a public debate between Mark Shelton and Wendy Davis, candidates for the District 10 State Senate seat. This debate attracted over 200 audience members from the local and campus communities. Moderators for the event included both TCU faculty and local media professionals.

In April 2014, TCU Forensics was selected as one of six host schools to debate the Irish Times Debate Team, winners of the Irish Times Debate Competition. TCU hosted two public debates, and played host to our Irish guests for four days. The evening debate attracted an audience of around 125.

In March 2015, TCU will present a public debate against Wiley College. Wiley’s famous 1935 season was portrayed in the movie “The Great Debaters,” showing how the team was excluded from debating on most collegiate campuses. In August 2014, Fort Worth Magazine published an article detailing TCU’s part of the Wiley story. TCU was the first campus in the nation to invite Wiley to debate on campus in a public event. This debate occurred in March, 1935. This March, TCU and Wiley will engage in a commemorative debate on the 80th anniversary of the original match.

Prior to the Wiley debate at TCU, the TCU debaters will travel to Wiley College to engage in a public debate on Wiley’s campus January 23, 2015. Wiley hosts public debates every year during their campus honors week, and this year, TCU is honored to be the visiting team.