

I moved from my home state of Iowa to Texas 22 years ago. I have now taught and coached longer in this state than I did in my home state. I've always believed it is an obligation of all capable persons to contribute their talents and abilities to any organization to which they belong. That is one of the motivations for me to announce my intention to run for TFA President.

I am one of advanced years. I've experienced just about everything one can in this activity. I am probably one of the few people who can explain the reasons for the 30 speaker point scale in debate. Such an experience helps provide a context for discussions of change, helping to avoid pitfalls and unintended consequences. I know, from experience, where the benefits lie in most proposals.

Having served this community for 12 years as a member of the NSDA board of directors has helped me hone my abilities to address tough issues and make difficult decisions. Being a member of that board has also taught me that transparency and a willingness to listen and consider as many voices as possible when addressing issues is vitally important. My board experience has also taught me that you have to be humble enough sometimes to ask questions and solicit advice from persons more knowledgeable than you. One needs to be confident enough to know when they don't know something, and be smart enough to ask somebody who does. Those practices allow one to get the information necessary to make good decisions. Those are all things that I hope to bring to this position.

What's your agenda? When one is running for such a position, that's a question one often gets asked. My overall agenda is to serve the members of TFA. We need to have open and honest discussions about the future of this activity and how we conduct our events moving forward. The past two years have been extremely difficult ones. We feel disengaged and know that we are struggling to attract students to speech and debate. It's not just us. Our students feel disengaged and are being deprived of the in-person experience we all crave because of the ongoing pandemic. Our goal should be to provide as many opportunities as possible for students. We need to address and overcome the barriers that prevent us from doing so.

What is the purpose of the TFA? Is it just to sanction a number of tournaments and then host a state wide championship? If so, then we need to examine our constitution, align with the best competitive and pedagogical practices, and assure that all qualifying meets are conducted according to those rules. If we think our role ought to be larger than that, then we need to have serious discussions about how we can better advocate for speech and debate moving forward. We need to address the issues of coach recruitment and retention, budget restrictions due to the health crisis, judge training, and the host of issues which plague our activity. We need to be the organization that advocates for speech and debate in Texas. Certainly there are others; however, we need to be the leader in those endeavors.

We need to understand our finances better. The current treasurer, Noah Recker, has done a great job in making sure we are financially solvent. However, we need to make sure we are better prepared as we move forward. As some of you know, ongoing issues with our non-profit status need to be resolved. I will work to ensure that happens. Second, to continue to enhance transparency, the EC under my leadership would review more consistently and thoroughly the financial information for the organization, doing our fiduciary duty for the organization. Again, I would build on the recent decisions by the current EC after last spring's onboarding session to expand their understanding of the finances. That the type of accountability and transparency members should expect.

We are at a crossroads as an organization. We need to have serious discussions about our organization. Those discussions should focus on many of the issues and concerns I have outlined above. I would like to bring my experience to efforts to address those concerns and issues. I am hoping that, with your support, we can continue to grow the TFA and provide greater opportunities for students to compete in this great activity that we call speech and debate. I ask your support in becoming the next president of the TFA.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Huston, Colleyville Heritage HS