



# PI KAPPA DELTA

The Art of Persuasion, Beautiful and Just

To: Members of the Forensics Community  
Re: PKD/NFL Strategic Partnership  
From: Phillip Voight, President, Pi Kappa Delta  
Date: 15 November 2010

Dear Colleagues:

I write to inform you of an important new partnership between the National Forensics League and Pi Kappa Delta and to enlist your support for our efforts to strengthen forensics in the United States at the grassroots level.

As you may or may not know, Pi Kappa Delta has undergone an intensive six-year strategic planning process focused on developing important functional capabilities in three areas: Governance, Finance and Programming. (You may view our entire strategic planning document by visiting our website at [www.pikappadelta.com](http://www.pikappadelta.com)). As part of this process, we have formed a partnership with the National Forensic League aimed at encouraging recent high school graduates to continue their participation in forensics-related activities by becoming Pi Kappa Delta members and forming PKD chapters on college campuses without currently active chapters.

Each year, approximately 25,000 NFL members graduate, but only a small portion of them remain active in intercollegiate forensics. This fall, our initial direct mail membership campaign was targeted exclusively at students who attended the high school national tournament. Subsequent direct mail and recruiting efforts will be more broadly focused, with the objective of increasing the proportion of NFL alumni who join Pi Kappa Delta as active undergraduate members. In addition, the National Council has proposed changes to the Pi Kappa Delta Constitution to make it easier for members to join, to simplify the process of forming a Pi Kappa Delta chapter, and to incentivize undergraduate participation in service-related, scholarly and competitive forensic activities by adopting a point system similar to the one presently used by the NFL. New members will join by entering their data directly on forms bearing the Pi Kappa Delta brand and graphical interface, but the backstage components will be driven by the current NFL database. Two years ago, the NFL and PKD field tested this concept, and we are convinced that even in its initial stages, a significant proportion of NFL alumni will join Pi Kappa Delta. Within a decade, we believe that the partnership will reach an approximate yield rate of 40%.

## How will the partnership function?

Pi Kappa Delta and the NFL will soon conduct a search with the intention of hiring a National Membership Director and Program Coordinator whose job responsibilities will include overseeing the joint project. Both Pi Kappa Delta and the NFL will financially contribute toward that person's salary and benefits package, and Pi Kappa Delta will also make a fee-for-service contribution to the NFL for the use of the NFL's proprietary database. Each organization will share in programming and related expenses.

Beginning in the fall of 2011, and expanding rapidly from that point forward, NFL alumni will arrive on college campuses across the country already having enrolled as Pi Kappa Delta members. On campuses with presently active PKD chapters, these new students will be seamlessly integrated with existing members. Coaches will simply receive a list of new members at the beginning of each school year.

On campuses without an active PKD chapter and without an organized speech or debate program, new Pi Kappa Delta members will be encouraged to conduct community service activities, participate in undergraduate research and scholarship, and advocate for the creation of an organized forensics program. Periodically, students will receive programming activities from the National Program Coordinator that are designed to function as "how-to" guides that any group of students could implement on a typical college campus. For example, students might be encouraged to host a quadrennial community-wide debate during the Presidential primary season on the topic, "Resolved: that the next President of the United States should be\_\_\_\_\_." Curriculum kits will include information on how to organize the event and reserve space, how to publicize it on campus and in the local community, how to recruit "headline" debaters from the ranks of local politicians, and how to encourage local media outlets and C-SPAN to cover the event.

Students on campuses without organized forensics programs will also have limited competitive opportunities to participate in Pi Kappa Delta's National Tournament and Convention via a series of electronic events that have already been beta-tested by Pi Kappa Delta. Consequently, even on campuses without programs, every undergraduate Pi Kappa Delta member will have at least some ability to participate in competitive activities.

## Why is Pi Kappa Delta participating in this project?

Many organizations are stagnant or in decline and our community as a whole is in dire jeopardy of losing further ground. The total number of students participating is probably at or below pre-Vietnam War-era levels. Over the past 30 years, the number of active programs has declined precipitously, and long-term trends remain quite negative. Although Pi Kappa Delta itself has experienced moderate growth in recent years, the National Council is convinced that time is growing short if we hope to address what amounts to a multi-decade decline in the overall strength of the forensics community.

Because Pi Kappa Delta is a comprehensive and diverse umbrella organization, and is not defined by its adherence to any particular form of forensic activity, it is, like the NFL, an ideal body to spearhead a revival of participation at the grassroots level. Moreover, our present membership includes both two and four year institutions that participate in activities organized by The AFA/NIET, Phi Rho Pi, The NFA, The NPDA, The IPDA, The World Debate League and many others.

From a resource-mobilization perspective, the National Council reached the conclusion that Pi Kappa Delta was also well-positioned to form a successful partnership with the NFL. As I mentioned earlier, PKD has spent the past six years acquiring the functional capabilities of a full-fledged foundation. Toward that end, PKD has initiated a variety of fundraising, gift planning and development activities; has created a website with secure transaction, video-streaming, social networking and other significant new capabilities; and has adopted a new communication plan and brand interface that leaves it well prepared to meet the challenges posed by this partnership. In addition, PKD and the NFL have an important historical connection and have always shared staff and physical office space. As one of the few (and perhaps only) intercollegiate forensic organizations with paid staff and office facilities, and as the only one with an existing membership database stretching back to 1913, Pi Kappa Delta is also familiar with the organizational challenges involved in mounting membership campaigns. Finally, the joint partnership fits perfectly within Pi Kappa Delta's strategic plan, and will provide substantial value-added benefits to existing PKD members and chapters.

Why should my program form a Pi Kappa Delta chapter?

Regardless of the nature of organized forensics on your campus, we sincerely hope that you will consider forming a Pi Kappa Delta chapter. Pi Kappa Delta membership will have no effect on the types of speech and debate activities you elect to participate in or on the national tournaments you choose to attend. We have not and will not seek to influence event rules, tournament practices, eligibility guidelines or any other set of codified practices that infringe on the rights and prerogatives of other forensics organizations. Indeed, we are truly ecumenical in our attitude towards the broader community and our intention is focused squarely on helping forensics flourish in all of its forms.

The primary rationale for forming a new chapter is that it will yield immediate benefits for your program at a very minimal cost. Our new website has simplified the process of creating a chapter and the entire transaction can now be completed online. Quite simply, this is the best \$5.00 monthly investment that your program will ever make. For a one-time cost of \$75.00 and annual dues of approximately \$65.00 per year, your program will receive a number of benefits, including:

- The ability to retain incoming recruits who do not elect to compete in the types of forensics activities offered on your campus. Using my own school as an example, each year we attract approximately 200 students with some form of forensic experience in high school. Only a small portion of them ever compete for us. In

the future, a significant share of these students will arrive on our campus as undergraduate PKD members, and whether or not they participate in competitive forensics, their community service and scholarly activities will be recorded and will form part of the budgetary and program evaluation rationale for our program.

- You will receive information about incoming students for recruiting purposes.
- Your current students, should they elect to join PKD as members, will receive access to all PKD services, including undergraduate research opportunities, internships, service opportunities and so forth.
- You will have access to a database and development tools for fundraising purposes, and will have an independent means of engaging in donor-prospecting that is not contingent on your college or university alumni or development offices.
- You will join a vigorous community of scholars and more than 80,000 alumni dedicated to strengthening speech and debate activities in every form.

Perhaps most importantly, we want this project to strengthen your program, rather than compete with it. We hope to avoid a situation where multiple groups are in competition as “the forensics program” on your campus. Because we have no way of knowing where NFL alumni will matriculate, the only way we can avoid mixed messaging is if your program forms a Pi Kappa Delta chapter and governs its activities.

This program is in its initial launch phase, and you will probably not detect its impact for the next 12 months or so. During that time, I hope that you will join us on this ambitious project. We truly need your help and your wisdom. I invite you to contact me with your questions or concerns and I look forward to keeping you informed as this project is implemented. A decade from now, I believe we will look back on this moment as a critical turning point in reversing at least thirty years of declining participation in intercollegiate forensics.

I am Sincerely,

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