

**Constitution**  
**National Forensic Association**  
**(Updated January 2023)**

**ARTICLE I: THE ORGANIZATION**

Section 1:

This organization shall be known as the National Forensic Association.

Section 2:

This organization is an association of intercollegiate forensic programs. The organization is a re-organization of the National Individual Events Association and the 1971 and 1972 National Individual Events Tournament founded by Professor Seth C. Hawkins.

**ARTICLE II: PURPOSE OF THE ASSOCIATION**

Section 1:

The purpose of the association is to promote pedagogy, scholarship, and competition in intercollegiate forensics and to sponsor the annual championship tournament in Individual Events and Lincoln-Douglas debate.

Section 2:

The name of the tournament shall be the National Forensic Association National Championship Tournament.

Section 3:

The name of the journal shall be the *National Forensic Journal*.

**ARTICLE III: MEMBERSHIP IN THE ASSOCIATION**

Section 1:

Membership in the National Forensic Association is open to all institutions and individuals in education. Membership categories are as follows:

- Individual Membership:** Receives *National Forensic Journal*, National Tournament Performance Links and Newsletters and listed as "Patron." Patron members can serve on NFA Committees and the NFA Council
- Alumni Membership:** Receives Newsletters and is listed as "Alumni". Alumni Members can serve on NFA Committees and the NFA Council.
- Institutional Membership:** Receives *National Forensic Journal*, Newsletters and Voting Rights (one vote per institution). This membership is necessary in order for a school to attend the national tournament.

Section 2:

Although encouraged, members of the association are not required to participate in the association's tournament(s).

Section 3:

The National Council as specified in Article IV, section I, shall determine the membership dues.

## ARTICLE IV: OFFICERS - DESCRIPTION AND ELECTIONS

### Section 1:

The officers of the association shall be: President; Secretary; Treasurer; National Tournament Director; Vice President for Administration; and Vice President for Professional Relations.

### Section 2:

The National Council shall consist of the officers of the association, four at-large representatives, one Lincoln-Douglas Debate representative, Past President (ex-officio), graduate student and three undergraduate student representatives, with one being the Lincoln-Douglas student representative, one being the Junior representative for speech and the other being the Senior representative for speech. A school may not have more than one member on the council at any given time, with the exception of the undergraduate student representatives. Undergraduate student representatives may be from the same school as a current National Council member. However, no school can have more than one undergraduate student representative at any given time.

### Section 3:

All National Council members except the undergraduate student representatives, Past President; and the Tournament Director shall be elected by ballot to the NFA membership. They shall serve the following terms in office: President - 3 years; Vice President for Administration - 3 years; Vice President for Professional Relations - 3 years; Secretary – 3 years, Treasurer – 3 years; At-large representatives - 2 years; Lincoln-Douglas representative – 3 years; and Graduate Student Representative – 1 year. The junior undergraduate student representative for speech shall be elected for a two-year term (first year serving as junior representative and second year serving as senior representative) and a new junior representative will be elected each year by the undergraduate student assembly. The Lincoln-Douglas student representative will be elected for a one-year term, renewable once, by the undergraduate student assembly. The National Tournament Director shall be appointed to a three-year term by the President, upon approval by the National Council.

No elected member of the national council (President, Vice President for Administration, and Vice President for Professional Relations, Secretary, Treasurer, Lincoln-Douglas representative, or member at large) may serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office. The Past President may serve as an ex-officio member of the council until the election of a new President.

### Section 4:

A National Council member may be a non-forensic coach as long as that person is a member of the association.

### Section 5:

The graduate student representative must be an active participating coach enrolled in a graduate program working toward an M.S., M.A., M.F.A., or Ph.D. at an NFA member school. If running in April for a school which they will begin attending in September, they must provide the elections committee chair a letter of acceptance to the graduate school and endorsement by the graduate school's Director of Forensics.

### Section 6:

The undergraduate student representative must be an active participant in forensics. Eligible students for the junior representative for speech position must be at least a sophomore with two remaining years of intentional forensics eligibility in any of the eleven NFA individual events. The junior representative will automatically serve as the senior representative in their second year of service unless impeached by a vote of no confidence by the undergraduate student membership at the national tournament with a majority of 66%. In the case of impeachment, the runner up from the previous year's election will serve as the senior representative. Eligible students for the Lincoln-Douglas student representative position must have at least one remaining year of intentional forensics eligibility in Lincoln-Douglas debate. Eligible undergraduate students must provide a letter of support from a director/captain of their program at the time of election and must not be from the same school as the current senior student representative. The newly elected Lincoln-Douglas student representative and junior representative from speech must not be from the same school as each other, and if two students from the same school win their respective elections, the student who won the election by a bigger margin will be appointed and the runner-up will be appointed for the other position.

## **ARTICLE V: OFFICERS - DUTIES**

### Section 1:

The National Council shall lead the association and uphold all articles of the Constitution and its By-Laws. Council membership is a year-round commitment. With the exception of student representatives, all Council members are expected to attend all scheduled meetings.

### Section 2:

The President shall:

- A. Chair the National Council.
- B. Chair all meetings of the association and the awards session at the National Tournament.
- C. Uphold the Constitution and its By-Laws and all other decisions of the National Assembly.
- D. Represent the association to other organization meetings.
- E. Serve as a member of the National Tournament Committee.
- F. Appoint appropriate committees.
- G. Appoint a National Tournament Director with approval from the National Council.
- H. Appoint an Editor for the *National Forensic Journal*, with approval from the National Council.
- I. Be responsible for tournament bid solicitation and approval.
- J. Make appropriate site visitations (when possible) along with the tournament director for the National Tournament.
- K. Assist the Vice President for Administration with the editing and mailing of newsletters.
- L. Coordinate any financial expenditures with the Treasurer.
- M. On a temporary basis, reassign any responsibilities, as otherwise listed in Article V, as necessary.

### Section 3:

The Past President shall:

- A. Serve in an advisory role to the council
- B. Assume responsibility to chair committees as appointed by the President.
- C. Be available at the request of the National Tournament Committee for assignments to tournament operation duties.

### Section 4:

The Vice President for Administration shall:

- A. Assist the President.
- B. Assume the office of President if the incumbent vacates the office.
- C. Assist the National Tournament Director.
- D. Serve as a member of the National Tournament Committee.
- E. Serve as the liaison to the Undergraduate Student Assembly.
- F. With the assistance of the President, edit and mail newsletters to all member schools.

Section 5:

The Vice President for Professional Relations shall:

- A. Serve as the primary advocate for forensic pedagogy and scholarship on behalf of the organization.
- B. Serve as the primary program planner for the NFA Convention Programs at the National Communication Association Convention.
- C. Advise and assist in the publication of the *National Forensic Journal*.
- D. Assist the President as a liaison with other forensic organizations.

Section 6:

The Secretary shall:

- A. Record and distribute minutes of all meetings of the association
- B. Coordinate, along with the President, all correspondence to membership.
- C. Maintain membership records of the organization.
- E. Serve as the archivist for the association.
- F. Serve as the historian for the association.

Section 7:

The Treasurer shall:

- A. Serve as the financial officer for the association whose signature, or the President's, shall be required on all expenditures.
- B. Maintain all financial records for the association.
- C. Provide financial reports to the membership at the general business meetings.

Section 8:

The at-Large Representatives to the National Council shall:

- A. Assume responsibility to chair committees as appointed by the President.
- B. Be available at the request of the National Tournament Committee for assignments to tournament operation duties.

Section 9:

The Lincoln-Douglas Representative to the National Council shall:

- A. Chair the Lincoln-Douglas Committee.
- B. Coordinate and supervise the topic selection process
- C. Support and promote the development of Lincoln-Douglas debate.
- D. Be available at the request of the National Tournament Committee for assignments to tournament operation duties.

Section 10:

The Graduate Student Representative to the National Council shall:

- A. Assume responsibility to chair committees as appointed by the President.

- B. Be available at the request of the National Tournament Committee for assignments to tournament operation duties.
- C. Solicit input from and promote the interests of the graduate student community to the National Council.

Section 11:

The Undergraduate Student Representatives to the National Council shall:

- A. Attend bi-annual National Council and general business meetings.
- B. Chair the Undergraduate Student Assembly.
- C. Solicit input from and promote the interests of the undergraduate student community to the National Council.

Section 12:

The National Tournament Director shall:

- A. Be responsible for certification of all entries for the National Tournament. If questions arise concerning certification, the National Tournament Director shall consult with the National Tournament Committee.
- B. Be responsible for the preparation and implementation of the National Championship Tournament.
- C. Shall serve as a member of the National Council.
- D. Make appropriate site visitations along with the President for the National Tournament.
- E. Shall serve as the Chair of the National Tournament Committee.
- F. Be compensated fairly, as determined by the National Council.

Section 13:

The National Tournament Committee shall include the President, National Tournament Director, and the Vice President for Administration. The Committee is chaired by the National Tournament Director.

Section 14:

The National Tournament Committee shall make all personnel assignments for the tournament.

Section 15:

The President shall appoint at least 3 members to each of the following committees:

- A. Constitution: This committee shall be responsible for proposing changes and monitoring the Constitution and By-Laws.
- B. Elections: This committee shall be responsible for insuring that a full slate of qualified candidates runs for each office and shall count the ballots for all elections.
- C. Ethics: This committee shall oversee the Code of Ethics and assist the Constitution committee in proposing necessary changes as warranted; and shall oversee its enforcement.
- D. Extemporaneous: This committee shall create the extemporaneous topics for the National tournament.
- E. Impromptu: This committee shall create the impromptu topics for the National tournament.
- F. Research: This committee shall oversee all research to be conducted at the national tournament.
- G. Awards: This committee shall oversee the selection of all professional awards of the association.
- H. Hall of Fame: This committee shall oversee the nomination, selection, and removal process for Hall of Fame membership, as well as the publicity and promotion of the Hall.

- I. Social Media: This committee shall maintain and oversee an NFA presence on social media channels.
- J. Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity: This committee shall propose, monitor and promote NFA's policies on Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity.

Section 16:

A seven-member committee shall oversee Lincoln-Douglas debate. This committee shall be comprised of:

- A. The National Tournament Director.
- B. The Lincoln-Douglas representative to the National Council.
- C. An appointment by the President from the National Council.
- D. Three at-large members elected annually by ballot.
- E. One student representative elected by the Undergraduate Student Assembly.

**ARTICLE VI: THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

Section 1:

The National Assembly is the governing body of the association and is the only body of the association that can change the Constitution and By-Laws.

Section 2:

The National Assembly is convened by the National Council and shall consist of at least one representative from each member institution. Any interested person may attend and participate in discussion. However, each member institution shall have only one vote. The President will only vote when said vote affects the outcome of that vote.

Section 3:

Each member institution shall notify the Secretary/Treasurer of the name of its National Assembly representative.

Section 4:

The President of the association shall appoint a parliamentarian for the National Assembly. The latest revised edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall determine all questions involving parliamentary procedure not provided for in this Constitution.

Section 5:

The National Assembly shall meet bi-annually at the National Tournament and the National Communication Association Convention.

Section 6:

A quorum of the National Assembly shall be 1/3 of the schools registered for the National Tournament and 20 schools for the meeting at the National Communication Association Convention.

Section 7:

The National Undergraduate Student Assembly shall meet annually at the National Tournament.

Section 8:

In rare circumstances where a time-sensitive issue is raised by or for the membership, the President is empowered to convene a special meeting of the Assembly. Notice shall be given to the Secretary / Treasurer to be disseminated to the Assembly two weeks before the special meeting is to take place.

## **ARTICLE VII: THE NATIONAL TOURNAMENT**

### Section 1:

The association shall sponsor the National Tournament on the third weekend of April. Specific dates are to be established by the National Council.

### Section 2:

The National Council shall decide by majority vote the location of the annual tournament, when possible, prior to March 1 of the year preceding the tournament. All member schools shall be notified of the decision.

### Section 3:

In order to ensure maximum participation under normal circumstances, there are no limits on the number of contestants a single school may enter in the national tournament. Relative to the tabulation of sweepstakes awards, in order to protect the competitive intent of these awards, certain tabulation limitations exist. (Note sweepstakes tabulation in Article V, Section 5 of By-Laws)

### Section 4:

Bid specifications for hosting the National Tournament may be requested from the President of the association. Bid applications should be submitted to the President by November of the academic year preceding the National Tournament.

### Section 5:

#### Tournament Fees

- A. Fees shall be decided by the National Council.
- B. Fees shall cover the cost of the tournament including:
  1. Trophies and Awards.
  2. Supplies and equipment needed to operate the tournament.
  3. Mail costs.
  4. Expenses for the National Council working on tournament preparation as assigned by the President and expenses of the President and National Tournament Director during the tournament.
  5. Any special meals during the tournament should be optional to any of the participants in the tournament and not included in the required fees.

## **ARTICLE VIII: AWARDS**

### Section 1:

#### Individual Event Awards

The awards shall be first through sixth place, non-advancing octafinalists, non-advancing quarterfinalists and non-advancing semifinalists in each event; novice finalists in each event. Open Sweepstakes, first through fifteen to schools compiling the most sweepstakes points in the current year's tournament; all divisions of President's Sweepstakes, first through tenth; Pentathlon, first through fifteenth; Founder's Cumulative Sweepstakes Award to the school with the highest cumulative sweepstakes points earned for each year at the tournament (when a school wins its total becomes zero); Community College Sweepstakes, first through fifth (although no more than half the entered field).

Section 2:

Lincoln-Douglas Awards

Awards shall be given to all contestants advancing to elimination rounds; Community College Sweepstakes, first through fifth (although no more than half the entered field), Open Sweepstakes, first through tenth to schools compiling the most sweepstakes points in the current year's tournament and individual speaker awards to the top ten individual speakers in Lincoln-Douglas debate.

**ARTICLE IX: AMENDMENT PROCEDURES**

Section 1:

All amendments to the Constitution and By-Laws must be submitted in writing to the Secretary at least two weeks before any meeting of the National Assembly.

Section 2:

Constitutional amendments must receive a 2/3 majority of the National Assembly to be enacted.

Section 3:

By-Law amendments must receive a simple majority of the National Assembly to be enacted.

Section 4:

Unless stated in the amendment, all amendments go into effect at the next National Tournament or school year.

Section 5:

Although debate, discussion and amendments to proposed Constitutional and By-Law changes will occur at biannual business meetings and special meetings, voting on all final proposal wording will be conducted electronically. Within ten days after the close of the business meeting, the Secretary/Treasurer will prepare and make available an electronic ballot to the designated programs' National Assembly voting representative. Detailed minutes of the business meeting will accompany the ballot. Voting will remain open for ten days after which the vote will close and all submitted ballots will be counted, verified by the Elections Committee, and the official results reported to the President and the membership at large.

**ARTICLE X: EQUAL OPPORTUNITY**

The National Forensic Association is committed to assuring equal opportunity to all persons regardless of race, color, religious creed, disability, age, gender or sexual orientation. Students entering the National Tournament must meet the qualification procedures described in Section III of the By-Laws.

**ARTICLE XI : STATEMENT OF DISTRIBUTION OF ASSETS**

Section 1:

No part of the net earnings of the association shall insure to the benefit of, or be distributed to its directors, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the association shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distribution in furtherance of the purposes set forth in this constitution. Notwithstanding any other provisions of these articles, the



association shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under provisions of the Internal Revenue Code currently in force.

Section 2:

In the event the association is determined to be a “private foundation” within the meaning of Section 509 of the Internal Revenue Code, the association shall comply with the laws and regulations governing such entities and shall distribute its income in such a manner as to not be subject to taxes for undistributed income imposed by Section 4942 of the Code, as hereafter amended or supplemented.

Section 3:

The National Forensic Association is organized exclusively for charitable, educational, and scientific purposes, including for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501 (c) (3) of the internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law.