

## Report of the Research Committee

American Forensic Association | Boston NCA 2005

Prepared by David Cheshier ( chair 03-05; Georgia State University)

### SOLICITING NOMINATIONS FOR RESEARCH AWARDS

No nominations were received for the annual *Dissertation Award* nor for the biennial *Wayne Brockriede Research Award* (the latter of which supports a major research project currently underway). The committee had discussed soliciting more nominations for the dissertation award last year. Among their recommendations was that invitations to apply be solicited by making contact with the major doctoral programs in addition to relying on the standard calls for submission made in AFA materials. Although that strategy was tried this year (immediately after the Alta Conference emails and hard copy letters were sent by Cheshier to roughly fifty programs with doctoral programs in argumentation and allied fields), it did not succeed. One impression that emerged from that process is that the *Dissertation Award* is too narrowly understood. Although the call for nominations is broadly written (and includes language such as “studies connecting to public controversy”), the handful of respondents in contact with the committee tended to draw a blank when it came to their own students and seeing their work as centrally connected to argumentation topics. It was also the experience of the committee that students undertaking dissertation research with a prior or continuing connection to forensics were not doing work they conceptualized as argumentation centered (and were more seen as connected to rhetorical or critical/cultural studies). The committee recommends that more systematic attention be given to this issue as a way to call further attention to argumentation research.

The committee recommends that the AFA give consideration to having the *Brockriede Award* lapse only to next year (that is, that the Research Committee not wait for two years before attempting to award it again).

With respect to the *Daniel Rohrer Outstanding Research Award*, the situation is different. The committee continues to receive a high number of very high quality submissions. Even here, however, it might further strengthen the status of the honor were work regularly published in the leading journals of argumentation and forensics be automatically nominated for review. The committee recommends that in future cycles this be considered (that all essays published in *Argumentation & Advocacy*, *Argumentation*, the leading forensics outlets, *Alta Proceedings*, etc.) be systematically included for review.

### THE DANIEL ROHRER RESEARCH AWARD

The committee is pleased to honor, on behalf of the association, an outstanding piece of scholarship which in the estimation of the nominator and reviewers sets a high standard for excellence in work on public deliberation. The 2005 Daniel Rohrer Research Award is presented to **Kathryn M. Olson** and **G. Thomas Goodnight**, for their essay “*Ingenium – Speaking in Community: The Case of the Prince William County Zoning Hearings on Disney’s America*” (in *New Approaches to Rhetoric*, ed. By Patricia A. Sullivan and Steven R. Goldzwig, Sage 2004, pp. 31-59). Both authors are well known to researchers interested in public argumentation and their individual and collaborative research activities are rightly regarded as exemplifying the best in the field. This essay focuses attention on *ingenium*, an understudied and often-forgotten concept whose roots can be traced to the work of Vico. Olson and Goodnight’s close reading of a Virginia controversy (the question: should Disney be allowed to build a theme park in the historically rich community of Prince William County?) examines how argumentation can be used to forge a *sensus communis* even in contexts where heterogeneous backgrounds and conflicting positions might militate against cooperation and mutual identification. The research carefully connects the classical traditions of argumentation and rhetorical scholarship with one of the most vexing challenges of contemporary culture: the manner by which public deliberation is vexed by distance, clashing value frameworks, and apparently incommensurable frameworks for public decision. In doing so, as the nominator noted, Olson and Goodnight have produced a synthesis that is “theoretically sophisticated, extremely well written, timely, and historically significant.” The committee is pleased to provide additional public affirmation of this research by granting it the Rohrer Award.