Comparative Advantages Case Structure FAQ

From: **CCA Debate Rules Committee Chairman**
To: **Parents, Coaches, Students, and Competition Judges**

Purpose: **Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about Comparative Advantages Cases**

In an effort to facilitate educational debate and minimize confusion, the following FAQ is provided to clarify certain aspects of the allowable Comparative Advantages Analysis Affirmative Case Structure.

What is different about the Comparative Advantages Case Structure?

When presenting this case structure, the Affirmative Team is not required to show a need (harms) for reform because the status quo has already recognized a need, set goals, and put forth a policy to achieve these goals. In this instance, the question of "need" is ceded from the negative debate ground. To balance this concession, the Affirmative Team must assume responsibility for all the status quo goals of the policy being reformed and show that their plan can achieve better advantages by comparison than those that can be achieved by the status quo.

Is the rule concerning goals in the Comparative Advantages Case Structure that is found in the "2018 Debate Criteria and Competition Standards" a new rule?

No. The addition of the language concerning goals in the Comparative Advantages Case Structure found on page 8 of the competition standards document is not new. It is intended to serve as a clarification for proper use of this case structure. The application of the Comparative Advantages Case Structure and the key elements required is commonly mishandled. This document is intended to provide even more clarification of this rule.

What is meant by "identifiable relationship?"

The goals of the status quo must come from the policy being reformed that is identified in the debate resolution. The Affirmative Team must show how these goals are relevant to the mandates they are presenting in the context of their affirmation of the debate resolution. If the Affirmative Team were allowed to state any broad ideological goals without restriction, it would force the Negative Team to defend too much ground and is unfair.

What would be an example of a broad or ideological goal?

It should be the policy of the Federal Government to maximize citizens' opportunity for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. From The Declaration of Independence, *"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."*

What is meant by "specific policy?"

The term "specific" is intended to be opposite in meaning from the term "broad" and point to the language of the resolution which typically requires the Affirmative Team to reform a particular federal policy.

Is the Affirmative Team required to present a status quo goal (singular) or status quo goals (plural)?

That depends on the policy being reformed. Some federal policies have multiple goals, and some federal policies have a singular goal. Where multiple goals exist, the Affirmative team is responsible for all these goals and should disclose them in their 1AC. While the Affirmative Team's plan may not include reforms to address every goal, their

plan must better achieve by comparison the goals individually impacted by the mandates and the goals of the policy collectively.

What are acceptable sources from which status quo goals can be taken?

From the policy that is subject to reform as identified in the mandates and required by the resolution. For example, the "*Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933"* lists in its preamble the following goals concerning federal policy for agriculture during the era known as the Depression.

- To relieve the existing national economic emergency by increasing agricultural purchasing power.
- To raise revenue for extraordinary expenses incurred by reason of such emergency.
- To provide emergency relief regarding agricultural indebtedness.
- To provide for the orderly liquidation of joint stock land banks.

Another example in federal policy for homeland security might come from the *"USA Patriot Act of 2001."*

- To deter and punish terrorist acts in the United States and around the world.
- To enhance law enforcement investigatory tools.

Finally, an example of a federal policy that has a singular goal would be from *"The Voting Rights Act of 1965."*

- To enforce the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America.

In each of these examples, the existing status quo has already stated the goal or goals to be achieved and which the Affirmative Plan must achieve more effectively by comparison.

Can status quo goals be taken from Executive Branch Agencies?

This is not expressly prohibited. However, the Affirmative Team is responsible for accepting all the goals of the status quo whether their mandates impact every aspect of the status quo individually. In addition, they must prove that their plan achieves the goal or goals of the status quo more effectively than the current system. Keep in mind that federal policy is typically set forth in legislation passed by Congress and signed by the President. Executive Branch Agencies implement, administer, and enforce U.S. laws. That is not to say that these agencies do not create federal policies. When this occurs, the Affirmative Team must show that there is a link between an Executive Branch Agency's goals and the mandates of reform that they are presenting. Citing status quo goals from an Executive Branch Agency and then mandating changes to a signed piece of legislation could be argued to be inconsistent with the rule to draw goals from *"the specific policy being reformed."*

Should the goals advocate for the mandates specifically presented by the Affirmative Team?

Not necessarily and certainly not directly. It would be an unusual and awkward situation where the stated goals of a particular policy specifically call for reforms of that policy. The call and plan for reforms that better achieve the status quo goals customarily come from outside the status quo itself.

Is the Comparative Advantages Case Structure appropriate for every resolution or set of reforms?

Not every case idea can be properly run as a Comparative Advantages Case Structure. This type of case is designed to handle situations where the status quo has already recognized a goal or goals to be achieved and has promulgated a policy to meet these goals but the Affirmative Team believes that there is a better way to achieve these goals in comparison by reforming that specific promulgated policy.