

PCD Quarter Century Task Force (QCTF) Proposed New PCD Constitution Frequently-Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. What is the charge of the QCTF, how was it appointed, and who is on it?

The Quarter Century Task Force (QCTF) was formed to assure the health of the Princeton Country Dancers (PCD) activities and dancing over the next 25 years. The objective is to identify PCD strengths and weaknesses and to report back to the PCD community with findings and recommendations. It was created by the outgoing Executive Committee in Spring, 2003. Volunteers for the QCTF were recruited at dances and through email announcements.

QCTF members represent involvement with PCD since 1980, as well as involvement with other dances. The QCTF includes callers, dancers, and musicians. The following 9 people are members of the QCTF, in first name alphabetical order: Barbara Greenberg, Barbara Simpson, Carol MacAdam, John Vadnais, Patrick McDonnell, Richard Fischer, Ridge Kennedy, Sandra Johnson, Spence Wilcox.

2. How often does the QCTF meet?

The QCTF has met monthly, and sometimes more frequently, and has done so since April, 2003. The meetings have been supplemented with a conference call and extensive emails.

3. What does the QCTF view as PCD's central challenge?

PCD has expanded its activities over the years and provided a wonderful service to the community. However, there are challenges in several areas:

- a. increasing attendance, which declined somewhat over the past three years, particularly while the Suzanne Patterson Center was being renovated, and is recovering only gradually;
- b. ensuring our financial stability (PCD used a significant portion of its financial reserve during the last two and a half years. Recent admission increases put us on a more stable footing. We would now like to rebuild our reserve.);
- c. increasing the number of volunteers involved;
- d. doing more to nurture and encourage good dancing.

In summary, the Members of the Task Force believe the central challenge is to reverse the declines we have experienced and release more of the energy and talent of people in the PCD community by encouraging more involvement in our activities and in the organization.

4. What improvement approaches did the QCTF consider?

To address all of these issues, we felt that we needed more volunteers working more effectively. Therefore, the focus of the QCTF discussions was on bolstering the number of volunteers and the commitment level of each volunteer.

The chicken-or-the-egg problem came up immediately. How could PCD do more if there were fewer volunteers? Why would volunteers come forward if they haven't in the past?

The QCTF considered two possible approaches:

a, Run a campaign to obtain more volunteers.

This would involve posters, talking to people, etc. One of the problems was the recent history of volunteering at PCD. One person said, "If you volunteer to bring the sound system to one dance, presto, now you're responsible for lugging the sound system to every dance!" More generally, the QCTF viewed obtaining volunteers on a one-time basis of little import if PCD was not truly growing its dancer and volunteer base. The QCTF felt that a more fundamental change was needed.

b. Improve the organization so that responsibilities are clearer and narrower, such that a volunteer can limit service to particular tasks.

The QCTF determined that the first priority would be to improve the organization. The QCTF knows that many people do not want more formality, but believes that it is necessary to achieve our goals. A more formal organization would allow better separation and limiting of duties and, if done well, could increase the morale and fun involved in volunteering. The QCTF saw this as a way to stimulate the PCD community and help it grow. We think the way to reinvigorate the organization is through a new Constitution.

5. Does the QCTF think that an updated Constitution will attract more volunteers?

No, not by itself. What the updated Constitution does is introduce a structure that is designed to address issues such as attracting volunteers.

For example, the QCTF believes that when the duties of volunteers are separated into smaller, more clearly defined areas of responsibility, that PCD will be able to attract more volunteers.

6. Why not just continue with our existing Executive Committee (EC) structure and include more subcommittees?

This is very similar to what the QCTF proposed. The main difference is the clear separation of duties between the Board of Directors and the committees. The committees run the events and the Board is responsible for the overall effectiveness and operation of PCD.

7. Why is the Board so formal – shouldn't the Board be ad hoc, with whoever wants to be on it allowed to serve?

The QCTF surveyed other area dance organizations and reached the conclusion that a seven-member board seemed to be the best size. The QCTF believes that this will lead to more community participation as the "entry points" for volunteering, such as volunteering for program committees, is more clearly and publicly defined.

This structure also supports PCD becoming a 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit organization, probably under the overall banner of the Country Dance and Song Society (CDSS). This step could also be undertaken without adopting the proposed Constitution.

8. Is the Constitution too long and complex?

More than half of the updated Constitution documents board responsibilities and procedures. Other sections bring PCD into alignment with good organizational practices as suggested by CDSS and other successful dance groups. It says very little about committee operations, giving them significant autonomy.

9. If adopted, will the proposed Constitution be too difficult to change in the future?"

No. As written, the proposed Constitution requires a vote of 2/3 of the members present at a membership meeting to change it, with a quorum of 15% of all members. This assures that it is an open process.

10. What is the purpose of introducing PCD membership?

PCD needs a dedicated cadre of volunteers and PCD promoters. Members are the first source for this. Membership reinforces a sense of connectedness and commitment.

To make Board elections effective, one needs a stable base of voters, not just who happens to be present at a dance on a particular night. Members will provide this necessary stability. Additionally, the task force is looking into absentee and proxy voting as a voting option to provide some flexibility for busy schedules.

11. Can we improve PCD without a new Constitution?

Yes. The main thing is to encourage the involvement of more people. The QCTF thinks the proposed new Constitution is the way to go. Other approaches also may work. The QCTF continues to be interested in hearing alternative approaches to meeting our financial, attendance, and volunteer challenges.

Comments by other members of the community, both pro and con, can be found in the notebooks that are set out at all PCD dances. All are encouraged to give their feedback in those notebooks or by e-mail to the task force.

12. What is the recommended timetable?

The QCTF's first recommendation is to adopt the proposed Constitution. If necessary, the QCTF will continue on with substantive recommendations, though it would prefer to leave the specifics to a new Board of Directors. The QCTF would like to see the adoption of a new Constitution in early 2004, with Board elections in March, 2004. The QCTF will disband once its recommendations have been fully aired and either adopted by the PCD community, adopted with modifications, or definitively not adopted.

13. Aside from a new Constitution, what are the QCTF's top recommendations for reinigorating the PCD community and the Wednesday dance?

They are to set up smaller "interest groups" (committees) to focus on areas such as publicity, dance attendance, the English dance program and other specific concerns.

There are many "small" things that can be done to attract new members by such committees. The QCTF continues to think that the proposed Constitution best addresses the broadest set of PCD needs.

Review a draft copy of the proposed Constitution in a binder at the weekly Wednesday dance or on the web at www.princetonol.com/groups/pcd