



Nashville, Tennessee, USA by Derrick Brutel/CC BY-SA 2.0

Because SSCA's Sublime, We Walk the Convention Registration Line...

Our upcoming 88th Annual Convention in Nashville, April 4-8, 2018 is going to be a big ol' ring of fire; and there will be no blue eyes crying in the rain. All the info for registration is on our website: <http://www.scca.net/convention>. Before I offer some program details, I want to sincerely and wholeheartedly thank all the Vice Chairs/Program Planners. Their jobs are tough and we should all constantly remind ourselves that we're a volunteer organization; none of them told me to take this job and shove it—A huge Thank You to our program planners. Additionally, a big shout-out to all the reviewers! This whole process of crafting a convention program (and oh what a process—a journey on a lost highway!) is a community effort. And thanks, too, to Jerry Hale, Vicki Gallagher, Pam Bourland-Davis, Ashli Quesinberry Stokes and Roseann Mandziuk. And a huge howdy and Thank You to the good folks at Vanderbilt! I'm so very pleased with the program. In this article I'd like to highlight several things. I've gambled a bit



JASON MUNSSELL

First Vice President

Southern States Communication Association

jmunsell@columbiascedu

and made some risky choices that I expect (hope!) to pay off, but if they don't I'll have a reservoir of woe to inspire my own country song; frankly, I just don't know how to fold them nor walk away, but I can run. Those program choices were guided, in part, by our strategic plan, the context of Nashville, the theme, and our friends at Vanderbilt.

We're going to have several off-site panels that may or may not be hard to get to, but I see it as a process of SSCA engaging with the Nashville community and vice versa. In the program and hopefully on the website we'll have some specific information about logistics. On our first full day, Thursday, Vanessa Beasley will lead a small group on a walking tour of the Nashville Public Library, just a few blocks from the Sheraton (our convention hotel), where our members who attend will spend most of their time in the Civil Rights Room

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Name That Tune!

The largest SSCA conference to date was either the 2008 conference in Savannah or the 2016 conference in Austin. Savannah had the largest quantity of room nights booked at the conference hotel, but did not include overflow hotel options. Austin had many fewer room nights booked at the conference hotel, but also had overflow hotel bookings. We do not get an accurate count of room nights booked at overflow spaces.

All of this is a clumsy way of saying that the 2018 conference in Nashville is on track to eclipse either of the two earlier conferences. As of the second week of February SSCA members have booked 881 room nights. Our previous high water mark was 847 in Savannah.

Many of you will recall my nervousness at various meetings since the Nashville proposal was



**Jerold L.
HALE**

Executive Director

Southern States
Communication
Association

director@ssca.net

discussed at our 2014 business meeting in New Orleans. We chose Nashville based on feedback by our members and these preliminary data are evidence that the relationship between attitudes and behaviors is alive and well!

I am looking forward to great programs, amazing music, and the sort of fellowship that makes SSCA special. I hope you will join us in the Music City!

Appeals, Appreciation, and Applause



**ROSEANN M.
MANDZIUK**

Immediate
Past President

Southern States
Communication
Association

mm07@txstate.edu

As we approach our 88th Annual Convention in Nashville, I want to devote my last "Connections" article to issue an invitation for you to engage in your association, and also to express my gratitude.

First, I am making a sincere appeal to you to stay engaged and to be involved in SSCA at whatever level is possible for you. One of the most immediate things you can do right away is to CAST YOUR BALLOT and participate in choosing the future leadership of your association. Among my last duties as an officer was serving as chair of the Nominating Committee and recruiting these talented folks to stand for election. I am so thrilled that they were dedicat-

ed and willing to serve. I encourage you to read their statements and vote, but also, to be inspired to make your own contribution to SSCA.

Second, I want to express my sincere appreciation to all of you. It has been my great honor to serve as an officer in SSCA for the last four years, and truly, it has also been my great joy. I have had the pleasure of getting to know so many new people, and also had the good fortune to plan the program and host you in my adopted home town of Austin, Texas for our 2016 convention. As I finish my year as your Immediate Past President, I take away so many gifts that all of you have given to me.

Third, I could fill these pages with praise for all of the people with whom I have had the pleasure to have worked. SSCA is led by a caring, talented, and dedicated group of volunteers, from our wonderful Executive Director, to my fellow officers, to the division and interest group officers, and all of you who serve on committees, read submissions, and give your time in so many other ways. Thanks from the bottom of my heart - Our association is vibrant and strong because of YOU!

CONNECTIONS

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Jerold L. Hale
Executive Director

Thomas Ezell
Editor and Designer

Southern States
Communication Association

School of Humanities
and Social Sciences

2 Greenway
Charleston, SC 29424

Future SSCA Convention Sites

2019

April 3 - April 7 • Montgomery, AL

2020

April 1 - April 5 • Frisco, TX



**Pamela
BOURLAND-
DAVIS**

**Second
Vice President**

Southern States
Communication
Association

pamelagb@georgiasouthern.edu

The title may not bring to mind a country song, but it certainly epitomizes SSCA members and communication students with whom I've been working in managing the Theodore Clevenger Undergraduate Honors Conference.

While the term was ending, and sleep, play and good food likely beckoned, 134 undergraduates took the time to submit their research papers. The submissions from, literally, across the continent, represent much goodness—solid research and original thought about communication.

At the same time, I have enjoyed the graciousness of colleagues – some 56 of them – who stepped up to review about five papers each, at a

Goodness! Gracious!

time when their brains and pens could likely use a break between terms. A good number of reviewers signed up at our last conference, and colleagues allowed me to tap their expertise as well. I am also so appreciative of the e-mails from other volunteers who said they had reviewed in the past and would be willing to help again—regardless of whether they could attend the upcoming conference.

Reviewers included a couple Ph.D. students, prime recruits in my mind, as well as a couple professors who presented as undergraduates a number of years ago. One former UHC presenter, Dr. Troy Cooper, currently a senior lecturer at the University of Kentucky, commented on coming full circle. He said, "One of the most gratifying experiences of my undergraduate education was presenting at the SSCA Undergraduate Honors Conference. It was great to share my research and to see my work move beyond the classroom walls. Now, many years later, I am glad to participate as

a reviewer for the new wave of student scholars."

Reviewers navigated assessing papers with great diversity, ranging from traditional papers to case studies and applied projects, not an easy task. Guidelines provided this year attempted to bridge the differences in the submission types.

As I complete this update, we are in the last week before all reviews are due. Based on space availability, we anticipate about a 60-65% acceptance rate. Regardless, all students are to be commended on taking the time to submit. Based on their communication with me, I know they will be ready for the next steps whether another year of school, a job, or graduate school.

At the same time, SSCA is maintained by member-volunteers, and the commitment they bring to SSCA and the Undergraduate Honors Conference reminds me of what has always made SSCA that gracious, welcoming group that has brought me and others back for decades.



**Ashli Q.
STOKES**

Marketing Director

Southern States
Communication
Association

aqstokes@uncc.edu

Greetings from Charlotte, NC, where I have been learning the ropes this year as SSCA's new Marketing Director. I have some big shoes to fill, as Jennifer Mize Smith led the Association in reaching new marketing goals over her two terms in the position. It has been a pleasure working with you throughout the Fall to build upon her legacy. Indeed, thanks to all of you for your ongoing support of Southern through your continued program advertising, UHC sponsorships, and institutional memberships. We are lucky in Southern to have such amazing support, even in challenging budgetary times, and I appreciate your help in maintaining our strong partnerships. If you are still looking for ways to maximize the impact of your marketing dollars, whether it be in showcasing your institution at the UHC breakfast, highlighting your department in the convention program, or helping to spread the word about your faculty's achievements in the social media world, please do contact me at aqstokes@uncc.edu.

New Year, New Opportunities

I'm pleased to announce several developments/milestones regarding marketing as we head into 2018. First, as President Vicki Gallagher mentioned in her column, an ad hoc committee (myself, Dan Grano, Melissa Smith, and Abby Brooks, and Dave Nelson) has been working throughout the fall to create a comprehensive media and marketing plan for the Association. We have completed our initial review of the Association's strategic plan as part of our charge, compiled key findings, and plan to have a draft ready for Nashville. Some of the items we've been working through, for example, are how to create more exposure for the Association by better understanding how SSCA is perceived by those outside our organization. We are also considering how to better connect with members and potential members. What could Southern do to enhance your conference experience and/or involve you in the Association's life outside of conferences? You can help us by sending me any 'wishlist' items, regarding ideas about 1) updating and developing our digital media tools, 2) enhancing the visibility of our scholarship for students and colleagues at all levels and ranks, 3) facilitating relationships between members and university presses in the South, and 4) enhancing the visibility of our pedagogy. Sharing your thoughts will only make the plan stronger, so don't hesitate to reach out.

In terms of outreach and visibility, be looking for the Association's first podcast, *The Medium is the Message*, in the new year, and please consider reaching out if you'd like to become part of the next episode. We'd like to use the podcast as a way to spotlight the work of our members and the Association. Meanwhile, we've been working on creating a more consistent social media presence, so please let us know if your department has news to share.

Finally, we're excited to announce that we are debuting SSCA's First Official Band for the Nashville conference, "The Nobility." A local Nashville band will be performing as part of a panel (the first half of the panel will feature asking the band questions about how they use music, lyrics, and performance as a form of communication and how this medium communicates in unique ways; the second panel slot will be the band performing live). We will be promoting the band in the program and through our social media channels, so we hope you can check them out!

As I close my first column serving in this position, I'll reiterate its theme: if you have news or ideas to share, about your institution, your faculty, your students, or the Association, please let me know. Help me spread the word throughout the Communication discipline about the important work of our fantastic members. See you in Nashville!

Communication and Innovation: Pursuing SSCA's Strategic Plan in 2017-18



**VICTORIA
GALLAGHER**

President

Southern States
Communication
Association

vgallagh@ncsu.edu

As we prepare for our annual April meeting in Nashville, the SSCA executive council and officers are addressing some of the key items in the current Strategic Plan, a process that is requiring both communication and innovation.

First a bit of history: In accordance with our constitution, the SSCA leadership met during the summer of 2015 to develop a strategic plan for the association. The current strategic plan was compiled and presented by then-SSCA President Jean DeHart at the April 2016 annual meeting for the consideration of the executive council and association membership. Last year, President Roseann Mandziuk focused our attention on items of the strategic plan that address our association's long-term financial sustainability and our services to members. One outcome of those efforts was the change in dues and membership fees passed at last year's business meeting. Please be sure to note these changes as you renew your memberships and register for the Nashville conference, which promises to be AWESOME (for a preview, see First VP Jason Munsell's article in this newsletter!).

This year, during my term as SSCA President and in response to the unanimous endorsement of the executive council, I appointed an ad hoc committee to work on the development of a comprehensive marketing and communication plan for the association.

The current strategic plan focuses on three main objectives: **Enhancing Convention and Membership Services; Advancing Teaching, Research and Disciplinary Contributions;** and **Expanding Our Constituencies.**

There are several key areas where the ad hoc committee's work is likely to address the strategic plan. Specifically:

Update and Develop Website and related digital media tools (Objective 1, Action Item B).

Outcomes:

- More compelling website with enhanced information that helps serve as a gateway to enhanced membership services.
- Increased traffic on SSCA's social media sites that help members connect with one another.
- Enhanced ways to spotlight and disseminate information regarding member's work, awards, etc.

Enhance the Visibility of our Scholarship for students and colleagues at all levels and ranks (Objective 2, Action Item B).

Outcomes:

- Greater recognition of SSCA Awards winners and possible improved media coverage for the work of SSCA members.
- Increased opportunities for spotlighting outstanding and lasting member contributions to the Discipline.

Facilitate relationships between members and university presses in the South (Objective 2, Action Item C).

Outcomes:

- Increased awareness of members' expertise.
- Increased opportunities for members to benefit from the expertise of a network of SSCA members.

Enhance the Visibility of our Pedagogy (Objective 2, Action Item D).

Outcomes:

- Increased spotlight on achievements of SSCA members.
- Increased ability of members to benefit from knowledge of fellow members.
- Increased collaboration among members through mentoring and engaged sharing of ideas across multiple communication forums.

I am pleased to report that the committee, chaired by our SSCA Marketing Director Ashli Stokes, and including committee members Abby Brooks, Dan Grano, David Nelson, and Melissa Smith, are hard at work. The committee is charged with the following tasks:

1. Agree on a set of principles and/or objectives that will guide the development of the plan
2. Develop a set of priorities, action items and a timeline for implementation of the plan
3. Develop a clearer description of how the SSCA marketing director and the SSCA resource development committee will work together/complement each others' efforts and initiatives going forward.

I look forward to their report and to continuing to work with and support their efforts to bring forward this plan and to implement it on behalf of SSCA. Of course, if any of you have ideas or concerns you would like to share in this regard, please do not hesitate to reach out to me via email (vgallagh@ncsu.edu). All good wishes as we prepare for Nashville!

Don't forget to visit the SSCA website at www.scca.net!

Convention

Continued from page 1

(please note because of space issues you'll have to reserve a spot—only 20 can attend—we'll have more info on SSCA's website). That Thursday evening, Brandon Inabinet has put together a panel at Nashville's Parthenon (full scale replica of the original) in Centennial Park, Nashville's premier urban park. In the model of a Socratic dialogue, scholars will ask and answer if the Greek tradition of "rhetoric" still carries the same weight in 2018 as it did back in the day. Working with the City of Nashville and the staff of the Parthenon, this panel will be open to the public. Back at the hotel after the Parthenon we'll have our traditional welcome reception; I'm calling it "Friends in Low Places." That's funny because we'll be at the top of the hotel in the gorgeous Skye, 28th floor room/lounge (used to be rotating restaurant); spectacular, panoramic views of Nashville. This reception is always sort of a come and go so I have strategically given attendees time to get to the Parthenon and then get back home to the Sheraton. I hope. Just don't come home a-drinkin'. Do that at the reception if you're so inclined, Patsy Cline; just don't go crazy.

Friday afternoon we have a live band, The Nobility. And, for this conference they will serve as SSCA's official band; though I'm not quite sure what that even means. This double-slot panel will be located at a music venue close to the Sheraton. During the first panel slot, the chair, John Saunders (he put this together) will ask questions to the entire band concerning how they create and use music, lyrics, and their performance to communicate in unique ways with their audiences. There will also be a Q and A session with the audience. During the second panel slot the band will perform. The band's website is <http://www.thenobility.com/>. That band seems pretty well respected and I've been listening to them off and on as I put together the program; them and Taylor Swift. In a review of The Nobility's album, *The Mezzanine*, NPR contended, "Drawing heavily on early Paul McCartney and Kinks records, The Nobility makes jangly guitar rock with sweet harmonies and catchy, carefully plotted melodies." Also Friday afternoon, at the convention hotel, Paul Stobb will be hosting a VP Spotlight Panel that will feature Vanderbilt University faculty and community partners in a roundtable discussion about "town and gown" engagement. Panelists are involved in a variety of community-based projects, including a debate league for elementary- and middle-school students, educational



Parthenon by MICHAEL BROWN/CC BY-SA 2.0

programming at Nashville's independent theatre, and service-learning opportunities throughout the city. This discussion will address the importance of community engagement and explore the obstacles that inhibit such efforts. After that panel, we'll have another VP Spotlight that Bonnie Dow and Paul Stobb have put together called, "Understanding Nashville: History and Pop Culture in America's Music City." The panel will feature the city of Nashville and will include Beverly Keel. Beverly is Chair of the Department of Recording Industry at MTSU and is a well-known music journalist, commentator, and has worked in the music industry. You can find out more about her here: <http://mtsu.edu/faculty/beverly-keel>. Vanderbilt is also sponsoring an open bar during this spotlight panel!

NPR's Ann Powers will serve as our keynote speaker at our annual awards luncheon on Saturday. Ann serves as NPR Music's critic and correspondent. She has previously worked for the LA Times, NY Times, and Village Voice. Ann is also an author. If you're a fan of PBS NewsHour you might have seen her recently interviewed about her favorite music of 2017. Her most recent book, *Good Booty*, is about music, sex, race, and spirituality. I hope folks attend this ticketed event not only to hear Ann speak, but also to celebrate all the award winners and our SSCA community. That Saturday afternoon our SSCA President, Vicki Gallagher, will have her President's Spotlight, "Sound, Body and Mind: Communication and Innovation." The panel will focus on the innovations occurring across related subfields in rhetoric, communica-

tion and media studies particularly in relation to sound, bodies, and digital technologies. G. Thomas Goodnight responds.

Those are just a few highlights. I think our SSCA program in Nashville is pretty great. It will be traditional in most ways, but a little funky here and there. That might be a little ironic since I was actually born in Muskogee, Oklahoma and wear manly footwear. The program is a coat of many colors. And as you recall, the theme is "Muses and Musings in the Music City." I think daily about my muses, my mentors. And I muse. But I don't live in Nashville. Two out of three ain't bad. When I was finishing up undergrad I didn't know what I really wanted to do. I mean, I knew that one day I wanted to be *People's* 'sexist man alive'. And then, even in the '92 or so I figured that I didn't have the chops and that Blake Shelton would beat me to it anyway. Our muses and mentors speak to us and through us in our own each and every utterance, and in every light we offer and see. This is all to say I hope I didn't screw up too much! It has been my great honor to serve SSCA as its First Vice President and I hope that the 2018 program does due justice to the association and its members. I look forward to seeing everyone in Nashville and I trust you'll leave the convention with a satisfied mind. Oh, and post script—I have obviously quite a few subtle and not so subtle references to country songs in this article (as I do in the program). If you catch them all let me know I'll bring you a can of beans for breakfast at our Friday morning business meeting.

SSCA DIVISIONS AND INTEREST GROUPS

SSCA DIVISIONS

- Applied Communication
- Communication Theory
- Community College
- Freedom of Speech
- Gender Studies
- Instructional Development
- Intercultural Communication
- Interpersonal Communication
- Language and Social Interaction
- Mass Communication
- Performance Studies
- Political Communication
- Popular Communication
- Public Relations
- Rhetoric and Public Address
- Southern Argumentation and Forensics

INTEREST GROUPS

- Association for Communication Administrators (ACA)
- American Society for the History of Rhetoric
- Ethnography
- Kenneth Burke Society
- Philosophy & Ethics of Communication

Don't forget to visit the SSCA website at www.sca.net!

Click to connect with SSCA.



CONNECTIONS

Jerold L. Hale, Executive Director
Southern States Communication Association
School of Humanities and Social Sciences
2 Greenway
Charleston, SC 29424