

Vice President's Report

November 18, 2005

Southern States Communication Association Executive Council

Boston, MA

1. Convention Plans

The vice president's year is no doubt always a busy one, and mine has been no exception. Most of my time has been devoted to planning next year's convention. Over the summer I laid the groundwork by announcing features that I thought might give people additional reasons to attend our convention, and therefore submit papers in September. Some of these ideas were new, but had been discussed with the other officers for more than a year, while other ones evolved from innovations by Ken Cissna. Mary Anne Fitzpatrick, formerly faculty member, chair, and graduate school administrator at the University of Wisconsin, and currently Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of South Carolina will present the luncheon address. Rod Hart, Dean of the School of Communication, at the University of Texas will present a plenary session immediately prior to the no host reception on the first day of the conference. Both of these individuals are accomplished scholars with considerable breath of experience in our field as well and I look forward to hearing them speak. Following Ken Cissna's lead, I am continuing with the workshop series that he instituted last year. I solicited recommendations for these from the division and interest group vice-chairs. I selected those that I thought would offer something different than is normally programmed, and solicited others. Most of these were also announced prior to the convention, though I am still working on a few others. Though I think all of these offer great opportunities for segments of our association, I'll mention one that I am particularly excited about. Sandra Petronio and Tom Socha will offer a "A Collaborate Research Initiative" which invites faculty and students to join them in undertaking a study related to Petronio's privacy management theory. Anyone who wants to can walk through the door and join a collaborative research team, not only learning from these dedicated scholars but making a meaningful contribution to their field. This session can fulfill what I think are the most important functions of our association: to bring people together with common interests in order to advance their discipline and foster their professional development. Another feature of the convention that I announced in the summer was a round-table, breakfast discussion session. From 7-8, on Saturday morning of our convention, members will be able to join others for a light breakfast while discussing across a round table, topics of current professional interest. I will be soliciting leaders and discussion topics from the members of the association late this fall. And, we are including this year for the first time, I think, a pre-conference prior to the official start of the convention. I know we've held the UHC before the conference and Wake Forest hosted a conference on ethics in association with our meeting, but I think this is the first time we have had anything quite like this. Dr. Deanna Dannels of North Carolina State University is organizing an

all-day conference on communication across the curriculum. This provides not only an opportunity for our members to learn about and share their experiences with this movement, but also a chance to bring new people to our convention.

After making these plans, things took an unexpected turn. Hurricane Katrina knocked my personal as well as ssca concerns, down the Maslow's hierarchy from a focus on excellence (self-actualization) to survival (physical and safety). After overcoming the personal problems resulting from this storm getting to a phone that worked, I began discussions with the other officers, about the implications of the storm for submissions. We decided a delay was advisable and I postponed the deadline by 2 weeks, the approximate time people at the margins of the storm were out of school. Moreover, I decided that Hurricane Katrina was significant enough an event to warrant a special call for papers with a later deadline to bring together people from our discipline who were studying it. Dr. Rob Ulmer, chair of the Department of Speech Communication at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock agreed to lead this effort. These adaptations seemed sufficient until Hurricane Rita headed toward Galveston and Houston. We had hoped that a convention in Dallas would draw lots of submissions from Texas, and the weather again threatened our plans. Fortunately this storm was not as destructive as once feared. Nonetheless, portions of our region were again devastated by this storm and many institutions experienced disrupted operations as they prepared for the hurricane. Again the officers conferred, and I decided to adapt the convention again. Immediately following the deadline for papers, I announced a special program for people in affected areas with an extended deadline of December 1. Trudy Hanson, former SSCA president, agreed to adjudicate the submissions. I hoped this would make it possible for participation in the convention by people who would have otherwise been prevented from doing so by these storms. We will learn in a few weeks whether this was needed or not.

Reports about submissions have been very positive from the vice-chairs of the divisions and interest groups, with some experiencing record numbers. I don't have any data from previous years to know whether overall they were up or down but my impression is that we are at least on par. Planners submitted to me 102 programs involving approximately 440 participants. I hope to include them all, but it is too early for me to make that a commitment. With the addition of the pre-conference, association meetings, the extended deadline sessions, and the UHC, this number should be close to 600. I have tentatively laid out the program in terms of times, rooms, and sessions, leaving space for the extended deadline submissions as well as for the UHC. Though the vice president routinely presents a draft of the program at this meeting, this is not possible due to our postponed deadlines. The officers considered this in our discussions about the convention and I decided that this could be sacrificed.

In summary, I think we are on track for having a successful convention: one with new features that the members will find attractive and rewarding; and one with a busy slate of programs for

each division and interest groups.

2. Convention Site Visit

On October 17th I met Emmett Winn and Hal Fulmer in Dallas in order to inspect our facilities and finalize local arrangements for the convention. I am pleased to report the results of these meetings. First, our members will enjoy being in Addison, an active, metropolitan area, home of more than 170 restaurants, many of which are within walking distance. Our hotel, the Marriott-Quorum is a short walk down a tree lined side-street from Beltline Road. A ten minute walk probably takes you to 10-15 restaurants. For those willing to walk 10-20 minutes, you can choose from another 15-20 restaurants. And if you want entertainment, there is a comedy club and several jazz and rock music venues. For anyone who doesn't want to walk, the hotel will take you and bring you back in a van. The hotel also provides free transportation to the Dallas Galleria, supposedly the most frequented attraction in the state of Texas. And lastly about food, the meals we had in Dallas were a great value. For lunch I had roast quail for \$8.95.

The Marriott Quorum is attractive and well equipped to host us. We will have ample meeting rooms, hall space for our publishers, a desk for registration, and comfortable guest rooms. It will be a great facility for us.

Getting to the hotel was quite easy. You can move quickly and easily from your terminal to baggage claim to the transportation area for shuttles or taxis. It took us less than 20 minutes on Sunday to get to the hotel, and less than 30 minutes to get back on Wednesday morning.

Local arrangements chair is Dr. Paul King of Texas Christian University. We met and discussed his role. He is excited to be hosting us and we are pleased to have him and his institution involved in our convention.

Several options were considered for an off-site event. Unfortunately, after considering the costs and past interest, I could not identify one that I thought would be successful and consequently have decided against sponsoring one. Rather, I hope to make the Awards Reception the focal social event of the convention.

3. Conclusion

Everything is on track for us to have a successful convention. Please encourage your colleagues to attend. We have lots to offer. The weather should be great – sunny and mild. The cost will be relatively inexpensive. I suspect people can attend ours for half of what they will spend in

Boston. It will be fun. We are a fun group, and this location will make it possible for us to enjoy our work, without detracting from it. And most importantly, the convention is brimming with opportunities for professional growth and enrichment.