

Southern States Communication Association Executive Council Meeting
Wednesday, November 19, 5:00 to 8:00 PM
2025 NCA Annual Convention, Aurora, CO
Location: Crest 01 Gaylord Resort & Convention Center

Attendance:

Zoom: NW, David Impellirizi, Amy Heuman, David Nelson, Colin Whitworth, John Bannister, Mary Meares, Breann Murphy, Chris Toula, Sara Baugh-Harris, Jean DeHart, Karen Hill, Michelle Groover, Todd Goen,

In person: Narissa Punyanunt-Carter, Frances Brandau, Pat Wheaton, Laurie Metcalf, Antonio Spokes, Erin Basinger (EB), Rebekah Fox, Chris McCullough (CMc), John Haas, Carl Cates, John Saunders, Kelly Morrison

Patrick Wheaton, Georgia Southern University, Presiding
AGENDA

1. Call to Order – Patrick Wheaton; 6.02pm

2. Welcome

3. Approval of Minutes of SSCA Executive Council Meeting

a. Published on the SSCA website at Our Story>Business Meeting Minutes; Todd motion; EB, CMc
Discussion: posted on the website

All approve

4. Approval of Agenda; Motioned and seconded. All approve

Two changes: Update titles on agenda to 1st and 2nd VP

5. Officers' Reports

5.1 President – Patrick Wheaton

Report in e-packet

Reviewed the draft strategic plan. A vote will be needed in April to appoint the next editor following Rebekah Fox. The Constitution Committee is considering a new name for the DEI Committee. Finances are stable but require proactive attention. Centennial planning is beginning, with guidance to collect stories and oral histories. An ad hoc committee would need to be created during new business and confirmed with a second vote.

5.2 1st Vice President – Narissa Punyanunt-Carter

Report in e-packet

The draft convention program is finished. The draft schedule is available at bit.ly/ssca2026 and is still being revised, with the online program to follow. Highlights included graduate student roundtables, a debate forum, and later business meetings. Submission numbers were similar to last year. Brochures are available for anyone interested.

5.3 Immediate Past President & Nominating Committee – Carl Cates

Slate for elections

Slate:

VP: 1. Electra Gilcrest, Nakia Welch, Ben Bates

LA: Karen Hill, Kim Hannah Prayer

5.4 2nd Vice President Elect – Leland Spencer

Report in e-packet

Not in attendance. Receiving Religious Comm Scholar of the Year (Congrats!)

Pat suggests attaching the CFP to syllabi

5.5 Executive Director – Frances Brandau

Report in e-packet

In this first year, she has worked on John Haas's recommendation to shift to a more functional website platform. The Administrative Committee approved the move to XCD, which also supports NCA. Background on the transition and plans to use the digital program and app to increase advertising revenue was discussed. The

transitions should yield savings beginning in year two. The tentative website transition timeline was shared, with hopes for year-end but likely we will run parallel websites through the convention.

5.6 Strategic Communication Director – vacant

5.7 SCJ Editor – Rebekah Fox

Report in e-packet

An updated graphic and list will be sent to the webmaster. There has been frequent unsubmitting of work, prompting discussion of clearer guidelines or templates. The special issue on challenges in higher education became complicated in Texas, but SSCA and other regional association editors provided support and guidance. AI use is becoming a major concern, with about forty percent of time spent with Taylor & Francis regarding legal issues. Reviewers are not permitted to use AI, and a formal statement and confirmation process will be developed. The group also discussed clearer norms for removing reviewers who do not meet expectations, the need for a peer review watermark, and questions about tools like Grammarly, with concerns about transparency in AI detection practices.

5.8 NCA Legislative Assembly Representatives –Laurie Metcalf, Ryan Tabrizi, and Antonio Spikes

Report in e-packet

Laurie Metcalf, Ryan Tabrizi, and Antonio Spikes met and reviewed key updates. Finances remain challenging, with a current deficit of about \$710k, down from last year's \$1.3M. Concerns were raised about unlisted expenses and the unsustainable 8M reserve. Fee increases of \$5 to \$30 are expected next year. Antonio noted a five to eight year window for financial recovery or significant restructuring.

5.9 NCA Nominating Committee Representative: Heather Hayes

Not present

6. Standing Committee Reports

6.1 Committee on Committees – Patrick Wheaton

Report in e-packet

Recommendations were provided along with explanations for any unusual cases. With Todd stepping off the Constitution Committee, Dave Nelson was asked to continue serving. A few positions, such as DEI under Hendrix, fall outside his appointment authority.

6.2 Constitution – David Nelson

Report in e-packet

The Zoom audio was difficult to hear, but four key items were presented. An updated report will be provided around the New Year. The group is exploring shifting the term DEI to Community Building.

6.3 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – Mary Meares and Kimberly Johnson

Report in e-packet

Kimberly Johnson was absent but is receiving the Presidential Citation RCA Award. Mary Meares reported via Zoom, noting concerns about retaining the current committee name and exploring alternatives such as Cultivating Community. Any constitutional change will require an April vote, with Dave explaining the process. Work on the keynote is underway but not yet finalized.

6.4 Finance – Nakia Welch

Report in e-packet

Audio on Zoom was difficult, but the report covered program cost offsets that will save several thousand dollars annually. Work is underway with Michelle Groover (Resources Chair) to explore ways to build revenue and move beyond breaking even. While SSCA's finances are currently stable, rising expenses, particularly convention hotel food and beverage costs, pose challenges. Modest increases in convention registration and membership fees are likely necessary. The Harvard and Associates report indicates SSCA's convention is losing upwards up \$50,000, and the journal remains a key financial anchor. Frances Brandau and John Haas provided additional context related to hotel contracts, site visits, and the financial pressures created by post-Covid pricing. The overall message highlighted stable finances now but growing concerns ahead.

6.5 Nominating Committee – Carl Cates

Covered in earlier report

6.6 Publications – Keven James Rudrow

Unable to be present due to an unexpected situation.

6.7 Resolutions – Breann Murphy

Zoom: nothing to report

6.8 Resource Development – Michelle Groover

Report in e-packet

Reporting from Zoom.

The Resource Committee is working on plans for print and online advertising, exploring a lanyard sponsorship at a \$2000 dollar level, and encouraging more publisher tabling. Work continues on preparing the Caring Connections for this year's convention, with a goal of selling 300 this year to raise \$1500 dollars, both through pre-registration and on site sales.

6.9 Time and Place – Scott Christen

Report in e-packet

Two strong options were presented. Myrtle Beach's Embassy Suites offers a \$230 dollar room rate with breakfast included, waived resort and internet fees, and a \$50k food and beverage minimum, with SSCA as the sole group on site. Jacksonville's Hyatt provides a \$189 dollar rate, walkable downtown location, higher rates for upgraded views, a \$39 self-parking fee, and a \$60k food and beverage minimum. Lauralee shared historical data showing rapid increases in F&B. Both venues were described as excellent, and there is no bad choice.

7. Division & Interest Group Reports

7.1 African American Communication Division – Keven Rudrow

Out as previously noted

7.2 Applied Communication Division – Mai Nou Xiong-Gum

Not present

7.3 Argumentation & Forensics Division – Gabby Lamura

Delayed flight

7.4 Communication Theory & Methodology Division – Dennis McCarty

Report in e-packet

Highlights from Kelly Morrison

The division programmed four sessions plus a business meeting, including one panel and eight papers with a 100 percent acceptance rate. An outstanding scholar slot was included, supported by a strong pool of reviewers.

7.5 Community College Division – Karen Hill

Report in e-packet

Reporting from Zoom

Division membership increased by thirty three percent. Submissions held steady, with seventy two percent classified as GIFTs. The group discussed creating a GIFTs repository and whether access should require membership, noting that contributors would need to grant permission for their materials to be included.

The group explored creating a GIFTs repository and debated issues related to posting versus publishing. Laurie Metcalf was asked to take the lead on refining the idea, originally suggested by Scott Christen. Questions arose about editorial workload, rubrics, rights, and ownership. Some noted that treating materials as proceedings would make them peer reviewed publications, which raises complications. The Publication Committee suggested leveraging existing journal space and review processes, while others argued a simple repository could avoid publication challenges. Several alternative models were mentioned, including past curated email distributions and potential integration with other journals or CFPs. The conversation will require further development.

7.6 Freedom of Speech Division – John Banister

Report in e-packet

Reporting from Zoom

Submissions were in the double digits. Extended abstracts proved challenging to evaluate because they require different criteria. Pat Wheaton confirmed that FoS included extended abstracts in last year's call and noted that

XCD can create separate review forms for papers, panels, and abstracts. The group discussed splitting abstracts into their own category and gathering acceptance data to help standardize future review processes.

7.7 Gender Studies Division – Cassidy Ellis

Not present

7.8 Health Communication Division – Tyana Ellis

Not present

7.9 Identity, Inclusion, & Social Justice Division – Joshua Miller

Not present

7.10 Instructional Development Division – Colleen Mestayer

Report in e-packet

Katherine Grace Hendrix will be honored at a Spotlight Panel as the respondent to the first two award winners (2023, 2024).

7.11 Intercultural Communication Division – Amy Heuman

Report in e-packet

Reporting via Zoom, the division received 13 submissions with a 7 percent rejection rate. Five panels were proposed, resulting in four accepted panels plus a business meeting panel.

7.12 Interpersonal Communication Division – Erin Basinger

Report in e-packet

There were 20 papers plus extended abstracts, presenting the same evaluation challenges as other units but ultimately resolved. Paper panel submissions totaled 20, with 17 accepted. Four or five paper panels were scheduled with full acceptance. A scholarly quiz bowl, co-hosted with communication theory and health communication, will feature a Cauldron of Knowledge competition. The division received a strong number of graduate student submissions.

7.13 Mass Communication Division – Umisha KC

Reporting from Zoom CHAIR: Chris Toula

There were 16 submissions with an 81% acceptance rate, and one submission was referred to Health Communication. Plans are underway to promote the top faculty and top student papers.

7.14 Performance Studies Division – Colin Whitworth

Report in e-packet

Reporting from Zoom

The division is rebuilding membership and received 20 submissions this year, including 11 papers, 7 panels, and 2 individual performances, with a 70% acceptance rate. An ad hoc committee is reviewing regional models and potential bylaw revisions. The third annual digital symposium will take place in February, and a panel is being organized in response to Dr. Alison Fisher Bodkin. The February online forum was also promoted.

7.15 Political Communication Division – Matthew Farmer

Report in e-packet

7.16 Popular Communication Division – John Saunders

Highlights: 100% acceptance;

Open mic event; will bring equip to perform. Can email John to sign up for slots. Hoping Thursday night Ghost tourism panel. Gave backstory.

7.17 Public Relations Division – Kelly Williams

Reporting on Zoom by Vice Chair: Breann Murphy

Highlights: 14 submission; 8 panels 6 papers; 1 rejection; 7 slots

7.18 Rhetoric & Public Address Division – Sara Baugh-Harris

Report in e-packet

Reporting on Zoom

Participation remains stable with 20 submissions. The division rejected 3 submissions for an 84% acceptance rate. Six panels were proposed, and five were accepted. Extended abstracts had a 60% acceptance rate. Two reviews were completed. Awards included top student paper for Taylor Vanderbeen of UGA and recognition for Shepard from the University of Arkansas. Two additional presentation slots were allocated for Scholar to Scholar and the Southern Colloquium.

7.19 Association for Communication Administrators Interest Group – Chris McCollough

Reporting on Zoom

There were 6 submissions, with 1 sponsored and a 33% acceptance rate. Appreciation was expressed to Erin Ryan for stepping in as vice chair following the passing of Pam Bourland Davis. The review team included eight members.

7.20 American Society for the History of Rhetoric Interest Group – Jason Myres

Not present

7.21 Ethnography Interest Group – Pamela Dykes

Not present

7.22 Kenneth Burke Society Interest Group – Alex Morales

Not present

7.23 Language & Social Interaction Interest Group – Robert Agne

Report in e-packet

The division received 5 submissions and accepted 4. Two were panel proposals, including one business meeting panel.

7.24 Philosophy & Ethics of Communication Interest Group – David Impellizzeri

Reporting on Zoom David Impellizzeri

The division received 3 submissions and accepted all of them. This included one panel and one business meeting panel. Two reviewers handled the evaluations.

7.25 State Associations Interest Group – Shaquille Marsh

Report in e-packet

Chair John Saunders presenting

The group has one business meeting panel and one additional panel, with plans to recruit members during the business meeting. Discussions focused on strategies for building, maintaining, and growing state associations.

8. Old Business

none (checked previous meeting minutes)

9. New Business

A motion was introduced to create a multi-year Centennial Commemoration Committee for planning the 2030 centennial, with amendments added to clarify the committee name and timeline (2026 to 2030). Concerns were raised about membership structure, voting processes, budget needs, and the importance of including finance, PR, strategic communication, and planning roles. Given the need for more detail, the group voted to table the motion until the April Executive Council meeting in Birmingham. Patrick Wheaton will work with the EC to draft a clearer proposal.

10. Announcements and Adjournment

Patrick Wheaton announced that the Birmingham presidential spotlight will focus on challenges to academic freedom. Panelists will include SCJ Editor Rebekah Fox, Patrick Wheaton as chair, a Texas professor dismissed over a free speech issue, the attorney from FIRE who represented him, and former SSCA and NCA President Tina Harris presenting an NCA committee report on tenure.

Motion to adjourn: Carl Cates and Scott Christen; All agree; Motion carries.

7.04pm