

CONNECTIONS

Spring 2021

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Virtual Conference 2021

Remembering a Friend and Looking to the Future



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Shawn Long: Remembering a Friend



Shawn Long
President

2020 has been quite the year. Since the last publication of this newsletter, we had finished planning and eventually had to cancel the Frisco, TX conference; we pivoted our upcoming Norfolk convention to be fully online; ushered in the next cohort of association leaders; transitioned Executive Directors; and have started the strategic planning process for the association. Although it may seem that the world is imploding around us, I am constantly reassured about the health and vitality of our beloved association. Although many of these rapid changes may cause some level of disruption, in the short and long-term, I am confident that the association will emerge stronger and more nimble than ever before...we actually have no choice but to innovate.

The best days of the association are ahead, not behind us. As we embark upon our strategic planning cycle, I encourage you to reach out to me and other association leaders with your ideas on how we can grow, improve and innovate the association. Big and special thanks to Jerry Hale, outgoing Executive Director, for his outstanding years of service to the association. Jerry has been an excellent steward of the association and he has successfully transitioned the reigns to John Haas, who will be exceptional in his new role. Big thanks to the outstanding leadership of Pamela Bourland-Davis, immediate Past President. Wendy-Atkins Sayre is planning our first virtual conference and she is simply the best. I look forward to seeing her vision come to life in April. Finally, Tina Harris is working on an outstanding virtual Undergraduate Honors Conference. I am proud to be the President of our strong association and our community of scholars and I am excited for all the great things to come our way moving forward.

I hope that you are taking great care of yourself and others.

From UNC Charlotte In Memorium

“Shawn impressed everyone he met,” said CLAS Dean Nancy A. Gutierrez. “It goes without saying that he was smart, creative, innovative, and forward-looking. But also, in this human dynamo was a completely joyous person – he loved his work, he was absolutely committed to students and absolutely committed to doing good in the world. And he loved to have fun. He had a great smile and an utterly wicked sense of humor. We have lost a colleague with a big heart, and higher education has lost one of its most visionary leaders.”

“It is not just what he has done that makes him so incredible, but how he has done it,” colleague Steven Rogelberg said about Long when he joined Kennesaw State University. “He inspires, he does heavy lifting, he engages, he drives, he supports, he leads from the front, and he leads from the back helping to lift others. He is the great combination of achieving excellence, but never by stepping on those around him. Just the opposite, he helps everyone around him be their best self through his example and support.”

[Click here to read the full tribute from UNC Charlotte](#)



Building Connections During COVID-19

Let's state the obvious – I, and likely most of you, really missed our annual meeting, our meeting of the minds. In that conference forum, we connect and reconnect, we recharge, and we get ideas for our classes and next research projects. We also celebrate so much good work, especially the efforts of those behind the scenes planning the conference. Shawn Long as vice president and all of the division and interest group leaders, and Wendy Atkins-Sayre coordinated the planning behind the 2020 conference. Shawn led this process, and of particular note, is his leadership in a seamless move to an on-line submission and review process. And Wendy had the undergraduates onboard using the on-line submission process as well. There were so many panels I had looked forward to, before we were, well, disrupted (sorry, Shawn).

As travel restrictions set in, and only a dearth of information abounded, Ashli Quesinberry Stokes provided significant support for managing communication with our membership. Jerry Hale, likely sweating it out a bit, worked with Janet Fisher to balance the business end of things with the site location and ultimate conference cancellation. Shawn and Wendy accepted the fate of the conference graciously, recognizing that our health and well-being were more important. I have to say that this was THE group I would want meeting if I had to get through another crisis.

While the executive committee met regularly, we recognized we needed to forward some business items we would have covered in Frisco. The most pressing business to complete for last year included the recommendation to move the ad hoc committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion to a standing committee, approve the budget plan, approve Frisco as a site for 2024 (pending positive contract negotiations), and to ratify Benjamin Bates as the next editor for Southern Communication Journal. These all were approved by the membership.

We still have more business to attend to including the commensurate constitutional changes for items such as the new standing committee. And given this was our third cancelled conference, the executive committee thought it might help to have more specific direction for alternative voting for business items – just in case. The Ad Hoc Ethics Committee completed a proposed ethics statement. Because this was a little more complex, and we've never seen a group of professors not recommend changing a few words here and there, we proposed this business item be moved to our next meeting. The DEI Committee also recommended the creation of a division, so the committee members will be working with John Haas, our new executive director, on procedures for obtaining signatures for the division per the constitution. The Committee will also be working with Wendy on a caucus addressing DEI interests for the online conference.

As we prepare for meeting online, I really look forward to seeing everyone. At the same time, I recognize that we won't see each other in exactly the same way. We may not be able to hug and shake hands again – too soon. But we do still have the opportunity to come together in that annual meeting of the minds. We can still connect and reconnect, and most of all in our community, we can make sure we're all doing okay and we're making it to the other side of the pandemic, even if online.



Pam Borland-Davis
Immediate Past
President

Visit SSCA on the Web!

www.SSCA.net



Update on Undergraduate Honors Conference

“You might find that the UHC will become a ‘must attend’ for your future SSCA”

Just as our students made plans to submit their work to the UHC, we hope that you will make plans to attend UHC sessions during the Southern States Communication Association (SSCA) fully on-line convention. Approximately 16 UHC sessions will be scheduled over the course of the meeting. The submissions we received for the UHC span the spectrum of communication topics and methodologies.

The UHC offers a unique opportunity for scholars in the field to engage talented undergraduate students in a setting that lends itself to more in-depth discussions than what may be possible in the traditional college classroom. If you have not experienced UHC programs in the past, I encourage you to attend several sessions and spend time connecting with the members of the panel about their scholarly activities. You may find that the UHC will become a “must attend” for your future SSCA conventions! I look forward to seeing you and your undergraduate colleagues online!



Tiny Harris
2nd Vice President
UHC Planner

2021 Conference Information

Virtual Conference, April 5-9, 2021

The full conference program with schedules and speaker lists is available at SSCA.net on the homepage.

**Click to stay up to date with the latest
from SSCA!**



Future SSCA Convention Sites

2022	2023	2024	2025
April 6-10, 2022	April 12-16, 2023	April 3rd - 7th, 2024	April 8th - 12th, 2025
Hyatt Regency Greenville	Hilton St. Petersburg Bayfront	Embassy Suites	Norfolk The Main - Hilton
Greenville, SC	St. Petersburg, FL	Frisco, TX	Norfolk, VA

The Future of SSCA: Transition and Change



Andrew Pyle
Strategic
Communications
Director

My name is Andrew Pyle and I am the new Strategic Communication Director for SSCA. As I write this, we're in our ninth month of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we're feeling the strain of it in every aspect of our lives. This year has come with an incredible amount of stress, pain, and uncertainty. Many of us have experienced hardship and loss. It's important to remember, recognize, and honor those experiences. At the same time, as we are in the midst of crisis, we find ourselves at a moment of potential. The pandemic has required us to think about every aspect of our lives and our work in new ways. We now have meetings, class sessions, conferences, and family gatherings in a virtual setting. Virtual events are not always ideal, and in a year where most events have been virtual - it's not really what we want. However, having an opportunity for virtual gathering and engagement means that we can still find ways to be together, to learn together, and to continue to support one another.

As we consider the opportunities ahead of us in the coming months, know that I will need your help. We are discussing the future of SSCA in light of this time of change and transition, and one of the things that has become clearly vital is how much we need to work together to elevate and support each other during the 11 months of the year that we don't typically see one another. To that end, we are working toward some new engagement efforts for the association in the coming weeks and months. We will begin weekly social media posts to highlight the amazing work of our association members. While we typically think of research when we consider academic work, many of our members are also doing incredible teaching, service, and various kinds of community engagement. We want to highlight successes in all of these areas. To that end, if you or a SSCA colleague you know of are doing something noteworthy in one of these areas, we want to share about it. Please reach out to me (apyle@clermson.edu) with notes about service/service-learning, teaching successes/teaching-focused articles, research, and awards. It's so important that we take time to recognize and support one another.

This is the first step in working to continue to draw our SSCA community together. We'll work over the course of the year to build additional opportunities for connection and engagement. Look for more news on these efforts in the coming weeks and months. We are particularly interested in developing opportunities for association members to connect and share their work with each other throughout the year, potentially by creating some mid-year opportunities to connect with each other.

I also want to take time here to offer a massive "Thank you!" to Ashli Stokes, who has just wrapped up her term as Strategic Communication Director. She very kindly helped me work through the challenges and questions associated with figuring out this new role, and I deeply appreciate her time, attention, and care.

You will be hearing from me in the coming weeks as well as I invite renewals for institutional memberships (or new institutional memberships!) and as I solicit ad purchases for the convention program.

I wish you all well, and look forward to connecting with you soon.

Planning an Online Conference in 2021



Wendy Atkins-Sayre
Vice-President and
Planner

This column is typically easy to write. The convention planner, having set a conference theme, overseen the process of sifting through hundreds of submissions, selecting papers for presentation and awards with the help of a whole cadre of division and interest group planners and volunteers, and seeing the entire conference come together, can now start dreaming of sipping on a cocktail at the end of a long week in some glorious destination, surrounded by SSCA friends old and new. But, of course, this year has been anything but typical.

Our first roadblock was that we were never able to meet in person last spring to get planners prepared, so they stumbled very graciously through the process alongside me. Our second roadblock was a global pandemic, causing us to struggle to find the energy for the basics, much less service to the discipline. Relatedly, our third obstacle was learning a whole new higher education world, finding ourselves facing zoom fatigue. Our fourth obstacle was making the difficult decision to plan a virtual conference, thus taking the SSCA convention into a whole new realm. But the fifth obstacle was the most difficult—losing our president, our steadfast SSCA attendee, our mentor, our friend, Shawn Long.

This has been a difficult planning experience, no doubt. Despite these obstacles, we have once again come together with our ideas and have created a schedule of panels that will advance disciplinary concepts, motivate new or continuing lines of research, provide advice for struggling graduate students, new faculty, and longtime faculty, provide stimulus for online and (eventually) offline conversations, bring together longtime friends and colleagues, and remind us of what SSCA means to many of us who have been members for so long.

Thus, I am thrilled (and a tad trepidatious, if I'm to be honest) to bring you the first virtual SSCA convention, thanks to the help of a wonderful SSCA community. The theme—Harboring Hope—seems more relevant now than when I first settled on it. Moreover, in the name of hope, I look forward to seeing all of you onscreen to celebrate another year of SSCA together and to honor the memory of Shawn.

New This Year: Professional Development Panel Series

Look for panels on tips for getting into graduate school, finding a job after completing a graduate degree, applying for grants, defending the basic course, and surviving in times of budget cuts. The panels will be designated as “professional development” in the schedule.

Tips For Virtual Conference Attendance and Presentation

Invite students to the conference so that they can see you present your work or see other scholars present. This might be a good way to meet with your classes during the week.

Chairs might make it clear that conference attendance, although virtual, is still considered professional development travel.

SSCA has waived membership fees and will only charge conference fees, hopefully making it easier for some to secure institutional funding.

Planning an Online Conference in 2021



John Haas
Executive Director

SSCA has served as an academic home for association members since its founding more than 90 years ago. All of us look forward to catching up with colleagues and friends at the annual convention after a full academic year.

In unprecedented fashion, COVID-19 upended our normal convention routine. The preparation for our annual convention changed – and kept on changing. Masks, isolation, and Zoom fatigue have temporarily eclipsed the topics we normally discuss in preparation for the convention. We had to re-envision what an SSCA convention experience would be like.

You can be proud of the officers in our association rose to the challenges of planning a conference in the middle of a pandemic. All of the officers were determined to carry on with the association's business. That determine was best exemplified by President Shawn Long. He continued to meet with members of the Executive Committee to coordinate convention planning until shortly before he passed away. He led the association during this difficult time with skill and compassion.

The planning for our first fully online convention is nearly complete. Convention planner Wendy Atkins-Sayre has been confronted by more challenges than perhaps any other program planner in the history of the association. Without a model to work from Wendy has planned an exciting convention that keeps many of the SSCA traditions intact but with a few new wrinkles. Tina Harris has planned an outstanding Undergraduate Honors Conference. We encourage you to attend the UHC sessions and support the work of our talented undergraduate colleagues.

The other officers and staff of SSCA also stepped up to meet unexpected challenges. Pam Bourland-Davis, Andrew Pyle, Kevin Bryant, and Sandy Cabbage have had to learn to operate in new or different ways to make the convention happen and conduct association business. Despite all of his responsibilities as Provost at University of Tennessee-Chattanooga, Jerry Hale walked me through the transition to Executive Director with a mix of humor and sage advice. To all of you, thank you for the many things you continue to do for the association.

Dealing with the changes wrought by the pandemic required resources. Simply put, the association was blessed to have Emmett Winn, Carl Cates, and Jerry Hale serve as Executive Director. Because of the stewardship of Emmett, Carl, and Jerry, we have the resources to deal with this crisis. They made the 2021 convention possible.

My first year as Executive Director has not been what I envisioned. In many ways, it exceeded my expectations. I witnessed how the members of the association pitched in and worked to create a new version of an old tradition – the SSCA convention. What I witnessed convinces me that our association will continue to grow and promote the outstanding work of its members.

SSCA Divisions And Interest Groups

Divisions

Applied Communication
Argumentation and Forensics
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

Interest Groups

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

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