Southern States Communication Association
Breakfast and Annual Business Meeting Minutes
96th Annual Convention
Sheraton Birmingham Convention Center, Birmingham, Alabama
Friday, April 10, 2026
East M, 8:00-10:00 a.m.

1. Call to Order

President Patrick G. Wheaton called the Breakfast and Annual Business Meeting to order.

2. Welcome to Birmingham, Alabama

President Wheaton welcomed members to Birmingham and to the 96th Annual Convention.

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the 2025 Southern States Communication Association Business Meeting were approved as published on the SSCA website.

4. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved.

5. Officers' Reports

5.1 President and Committee on Committees

President Wheaton reported on strategic planning efforts and highlighted the importance of critical thinking and communication as central themes for the association.

5.2 First Vice President

Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter thanked those involved in organizing the convention and referred members to the convention program.

5.3 Second Vice President

Leland G. Spencer reported on the convention planning process, the number of papers submitted, and thanked reviewers for their service.

5.4 Immediate Past President and Nominating Committee

Carl M. Cates encouraged members to become involved in SSCA leadership and to consider future nominations.

5.5 Executive Director

Frances Brandau reported on the website transition and the implementation of the new convention app. She reminded members to provide updated information for SSCA website post-convention. Members were encouraged to be prompt in their submission of materials for their divisions and interest groups. She also encouraged prompt early submission for certificates and plaques for the 2027 convention.

5.6 Immediate Past Executive Director

John Haas congratulated Frances Brandau on her work as Executive Director and stated that she was off to an excellent start.

5.7 Southern Communication Journal Editor

Rebekah Fox discussed challenges facing scholarly publishing, including artificial intelligence and international IRB issues. She also emphasized the importance of a shadow year in preparing the next editor.

5.8 NCA Legislative Assembly Representatives

Laurie Metcalf reported on recent NCA discussions regarding financial concerns, reserve funds, possible membership fee increases, and ongoing expenditures.

Ryan Tabrizi and Antonio Spikes also provided updates from the Legislative Assembly.

5.9 NCA Nominating Committee Representative

Heather Ashley Hayes encouraged members to participate in NCA leadership and emphasized the importance of identifying geographically and ideologically diverse candidates.

6. Committee Reports

6.1 Constitution Committee

David R. Nelson presented a series of constitutional amendments previously approved by the Executive Council. Several of these amendments involved replacing the term “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” with “Community Building” throughout the constitution.

Members were informed that the Executive Council had previously considered alternative committee names, including “Member Engagement and Innovation,” but those alternatives did not receive sufficient support.

During the business meeting, members engaged in discussion regarding the implications of the name change, including concerns about external legislative pressures, member access to professional conferences, and the symbolic importance of maintaining or revising the existing terminology.

Questions emerged from the floor regarding the order of consideration of the nine proposed amendments. President Wheaton informed the body that the six amendments pertaining to the name change for the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (Amendments 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, and 8) would be considered en bloc as passing or failing any one amendment without passing or failing all of them would result in conflicting sections of the Constitution. He noted the other three amendments (5, 6, and 10) would be considered individually. Proposed amendment 9 previously distributed to the membership for consideration failed in Executive Committee; therefore, the membership could not consider it for adoption.

A motion to conduct the vote on the DEI-related amendments by secret ballot was approved.

The membership then voted by secret ballot on the six constitutional amendments, which collectively replaced references to “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” with “Community Building.” The amendments were approved by a vote of 67-27.

Following this vote, the membership then voted individually by voice on each of the remaining three proposed amendments. Each of these received approval.

6.2 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

Mary M. Meares and Kimberly P. Johnson discussed the work of the committee and constitutional revisions affecting the committee's name and structure.

6.3 Finance Committee

Nakia Welch presented the Finance Committee recommendation to increase membership and convention registration fees in order to maintain the long-term financial stability of the association.

The committee noted:

1. Rising convention costs, particularly hotel food and beverage minimums
2. Continued convention losses despite efforts to reduce expenses
3. The importance of Southern Communication Journal revenue in offsetting those losses

The Executive Council had previously revised and endorsed the Finance Committee's recommended fee structure.

Motion: Adopt Finance Committee Revised (by Executive Council) Option D for membership and convention registration rates.

Result: Motion approved by the membership.

Following approval of the revised fee structure, the membership was informed that constitutional changes necessary to implement the new fee categories would be referred to the Constitution Committee.

6.4 Publications Committee

Kevin James Rudrow presented the Publications Committee report.

6.5 Resolutions Committee

Breann Murphy presented the committee report.

6.6 Resource and Membership Development Committee

Michelle Groover presented the committee report.

6.7 Time and Place Committee

Scott Christen presented the Time and Place Committee recommendation for the 2030 convention site.

The committee recommended Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, as the 2030 convention location, while encouraging future consideration of Jacksonville for 2031.

Discussion included:

1. Travel costs and accessibility
2. Hotel options
3. The possibility of negotiating future contracts with hotel chains if consecutive-year locations used the same company

Motion: Hold the 2030 SSCA Convention at the Embassy Suites in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

Result: Motion approved.

6.8 Strategic Communication Director Search Committee

Elizabeth Hanson Smith reported that the committee recommended Nakia Welch as the next Strategic Communication Director.

The position has been vacant since January 2025.

Motion: Ratify the Executive Council's appointment of Nakia Welch as Strategic Communication Director.

Result: Motion approved.

6.9 Administrative Committee

Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter, on behalf of the Administrative Committee, recommended Joshua Guitar of King University as the next editor-elect of Southern Communication Journal.

The Administrative Committee recommendation followed the Publications Committee's decision not to recommend a candidate.

Discussion focused on:

1. Whether tenure status should be a requirement for journal editors
2. The extensive workload associated with serving as editor
3. The need for future clarification of editorial qualifications and selection procedures
4. The strong institutional support Joshua Guitar had received from King University, including a formal letter of support and a promised course release

Members noted that Joshua Guitar:

1. Is in his fourth year at King University
2. Has an established record of scholarly publication
3. Has published a book, an edited book, multiple journal articles, and several book chapters
4. Has received recognition for his scholarship, including the James Madison Prize and an upcoming Rose B. Johnson Award

Members also discussed the broader issue of tenure policies changing in several states and institutions and suggested that the Publications Committee and Administrative Committee revisit the qualifications for future editor searches.

Motion: Ratify the appointment of Joshua Guitar of King University as Editor-Elect of Southern Communication Journal for Volumes 92, 93, and 94.

Result: Motion approved.

7. Division and Interest Group Reports

Members were referred to the written reports in the meeting packet and the Executive Council materials.

8. Old Business

There was no old business.

9. New Business

There was no new business.

10. Presidential Address

10.1 Introduction

Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter introduced President Patrick G. Wheaton and highlighted his long history of involvement in SSCA, noting that he first attended the conference in 1993 and had not missed a conference since 2004.

10.2 Presidential Address

President Wheaton reflected on SSCA as his professional home and thanked members for their friendship, mentorship, and support.

He described his path from banking to graduate school and credited Bob Frank with encouraging him to pursue a career in communication.

President Wheaton also thanked:

1. The members of the Political Communication Division
2. Colleagues who had served with him in SSCA leadership roles
3. His wife, Laura, for her support over the years
4.

He explained that his presidential theme focused on communication and critical thinking, noting that communication scholars contribute significantly to the development of critical thinking skills.

Because of time constraints, President Wheaton moved to have the full text of his address posted on the SSCA website.

11. Announcements

There were no additional announcements.

12. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded.

The motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned.