

Southern States Communication Association Annual Meeting

Birmingham, AL April 10, 2026

Health Communication Division Business Meeting Minutes

Immediate Past Chair: Adam Richards, Furman University

Chair: Tyana Ellis, North Carolina Wesleyan University

Vice Chair: Emily Scheinfeld, Kennesaw State University

Vice Chair-Elect: Jenifer Kopfman, College of Charleston

Graduate Student Representative: Diana Maame Agyeiwaa Agyei, University of Memphis

Secretary: Kelly Morrison (substitute), University of Alabama at Birmingham

Attendees: Benjamin Bates, Cora Farra, Arla Bernstein, Trish Amason, Aben Asemanyi, Ashley George, Grace Hildenbrand

Chair Ellis called the meeting to order at 4:23.

Report from Chair

Discussion of financial issues dominated most of the second meeting of the executive council. They are trying to figure out ways to cut costs - a lot of money was saved by not printing hard copies of the conference programs. They also discussed creating another SSCA sponsored journal to generate revenue and attract people who might be leaving NCA in search of another association.

Q: Could we (as a division) create a Facebook page? Chair Ellis said that she will speak with Elizabeth to connect through SSCA page to link out.

Different membership levels, cost increases, and scaled memberships were discussed.

Life = \$2000 Regular = \$75 Patron \$220 graduate \$75 total for conference & registration

Institutional affiliation up to \$125 premium \$150

Conference registration going up to \$75; may not be early registration discount next year.

The Eastern Communication Association has the lowest membership fees and registration, likely related to their endowment and three association journals.

Overall membership numbers have declined:

Currently 493 / Last year 532

Our division membership is holding solid as of March 2026: **Currently 37** / Last year 39

Faculty are losing institutional funding for conference attendance and travel.

The DEI committee has been renamed the Community Building Committee.

Chair Ellis asked whether we want to create times to connect as an association during the year outside of the annual conference and if there were suggestions for ideas for next year's conference. No suggestions from the floor.

Regional Association Membership Comparison:

SSCA 493 Western 1000 Eastern 500 Central 900

Report from Vice Chair

24 papers submitted, 1 moved to another division, 1 rejected

We had 9 programming slots again – which we filled with: one business meeting, one top paper panel, one submitted panel, a graduate student expectations roundtable, a research collaborative session, a poster session, and three paper sessions with at least three papers presented on each. Five posters were accepted for our poster session. Thanks to the reviewers.

The five poster participants were not given instructions about the size of the posters, so we need to check on that for next year and strongly encourage the posters to be set up near the expo hall to encourage attendance.

Collaborating with the interpersonal, applied, and communication theory & methodology divisions was discussed, including the possibility of participating in the quiz bowl and creating a mentorship panel. Strongly endorsed!

Report from Graduate Student Representative

Creating a social media presence to publicize what we do was discussed.

Q: Do we know breakdown of presentations of faculty vs. grad students for division?

Faculty = 11 students = 11 this includes rejections

Q: How do people select conferences?

Several topics were suggested, including cost, location, rigor, prestige, or simply the opportunity for an enjoyable weekend away. Travel funding is typically linked to national or international conferences but not regionals.

We discussed the need to promote the *many* positive benefits of SSCA attendance, including support, community, collaboration, and the ability to mentor and talk with one another rather than *at* one another.

Adding a short course during the conference using panel slots was suggested. This could be an opportunity for cross-division collaboration.

Elections were conducted. Results:

Vice Chair-Elect: Grace Hildenbrand

Secretary: Ashley George

Graduate Student Representative: Diana Maame Agyeiwaa Agyei

The Meeting adjourned at 5:18, before the presentation of the division top paper awards.

Congratulations to our top paper authors:

Top Faculty Paper

Predicting tick bite prevention behaviors in a low Lyme disease-endemic population: A cross-sectional study applying the Health Belief Model

Benjamin R. Bates, Ohio University

Cora G. Farra, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Top Student Paper

Communication about mental health among international students at the University of Memphis

Diana Maame Agyeiwaa Agyei, University of Memphis

Sesi Sedegah, University of Memphis

Abena Asemanyi, University of Memphis