

SSCA Political Communication Division

Business Meeting Notes – Melissa Smith secretary

Birmingham, AL

April 11, 2026

Chair Matt Farmer called the business meeting for the Political Communication Division to order at 4:20 p.m.

There was a discussion about the performance of the division planner (vice president) for this year's conference, who was not in attendance. The planner apparently did not follow the guidelines for review of papers and did not alert authors whose submissions were accepted. When this was noticed by the SSCA 1st Vice President and program planner for this year, the division chair was asked to step in and help complete the process. Because no one heard from the division vice chair after this happened, those in attendance at the division business meeting discussed the situation and decided to ask Farmer to stay on for another year as chair, as well as also holding the immediate past chair position.

Top Paper award winners were announced. Josh Bramlett of the University of Alabama, Benjamin Warner of the University of Missouri, and Breck Gillespie of the University of Missouri won the top paper award for "How the 2024 U.S. Presidential Debates Shaped Candidate Brand Associations." The Top Student Paper award was presented to Mario Cerna and Junyan Lu, both of the University of Alabama, for "Unpacking Digital Sovereignty: A Comparative Analysis of left- and Right-Wing U.S. News Media Coverage of the TikTok Ban."

Farmer said that 15 papers were submitted to the division, and that 11 were accepted for a 73.3 percent acceptance rate. Four panels were submitted, and all four were accepted.

Those in attendance then unanimously approved the minutes from the previous year's business meeting.

Farmer reminded everyone that next year's conference is in Mobile, and members of the division were asked to contact anyone they know who is connected to a university in that geographic area.

SSCA President Pat Wheaton was in attendance and gave a recap of the Constitution Committee amendments that were approved in Friday's business meeting. Those included changing the name of the DEI Committee to Community Building and changing its description to leave out the diversity.

It was also mentioned that SSCA dues and conference fees will be increasing next year because the cost of Food and Beverage at conferences has constantly risen, which means that the organization has been losing money on the conference each year.

The division held elections for Secretary and Vice Chair Elect. Chase Ezell was elected as secretary, and Melissa Smith was named Vice Chair Elect, which means she will be planning this division for the Memphis conference.

Shana Bridges, the Vice Chair and division planner for the 2027 conference, reported that she had attended the planning session and that submissions for the Mobile conference will be due Sept. 15. She asked about ideas to include in the division's call for papers. Several people offered thoughts, and then Melissa Smith said she would send a copy of a previous call to Bridges so that she would have a template to follow.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

List of current officers for the Political Communication Division

Immediate Past Chair	Matt Farmer, University of Memphis
Chair	Matt Farmer, University of Memphis
Vice Chair and planner	Shana Bridges, Georgia Southern University
Vice Chair Elect	Melissa Smith
Secretary	Chase Ezell