

March 2025

CONNECTIONS



Norfolk 2025!

The 95th annual meeting of SSCA in Norfolk, VA is a few short weeks away! For those of you not familiar with Norfolk, you are in for a treat. Norfolk is a waterfront city, bordered on the west by the Elizabeth River and in the north by Chesapeake Bay. Norfolk is home to a massive naval base on Chesapeake Bay. Attractions that may catch your attention while you are in Norfolk include Nauticus (a maritime museum), the Chrysler Museum of Art, and the riverside Virginia Zoo. You will be pleased to know that there are numerous restaurants within walking distance of the convention hotel.

In recognition of the rich naval history of Norfolk, the 2025 conference theme is about anchors and anchoring. Our shared interest in messages anchors us as members of SSCA. During the convention you will have the opportunity to hear from scholars in our field the many ways that messages anchor us as individuals, as a society, and as a discipline.

Patrick Wheaton, 1st Vice-President, has planned an exciting program for the conference. We look forward to seeing you in Norfolk!

WHAT'S NEW

SSCA PRESIDENT
CARL CATES

Association Updates

1ST VICE-
PRESIDENT
PATRICK
WHEATON

2025 Convention
Program

SSCA LEADERSHIP

Norfolk 2025!

“Anchors and Anchoring Communication.” What a great conference theme in a time that has certainly become filled with obstacles. Our First Vice President, Pat Wheaton, has been generous in providing slots for the membership to meet and discuss the past and future of SSCA. I hope you will join the sessions for feedback as we continue work on the strategic plan.

The feedback sessions include:

Thursday 9:15 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Room: Granby A
SSCA Officer’s Office Hours: Meet and Greet

Thursday 1:15 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Room: Momentum 1
Town Hall: SSCA’s Strategic Plan

Friday 10:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Room: Imagination
Anchoring Advocacy and the Association: What is the Role of SSCA in Advocacy? – Vice President Spotlight Panel

Saturday 9:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. Room: Granby C
President’s Spotlight: 95 Years of Anchoring Communication
Scholarship in the Southern States Communication Association

In Wendy Atkins-Sayre’s *Connections* article from the Spring of 2022, she wrote “We have shown resilience by fighting against the forces that might have made the organization stumble. We are stronger together and I can’t wait to celebrate that resilience in Greenville.” I now call for us to undertake a similar vision. We face multiple forces pressing upon us, any of which could make us stumble. As we gather in Norfolk, I believe we can work together to make plans to assure our sense of place and our direction for the future.

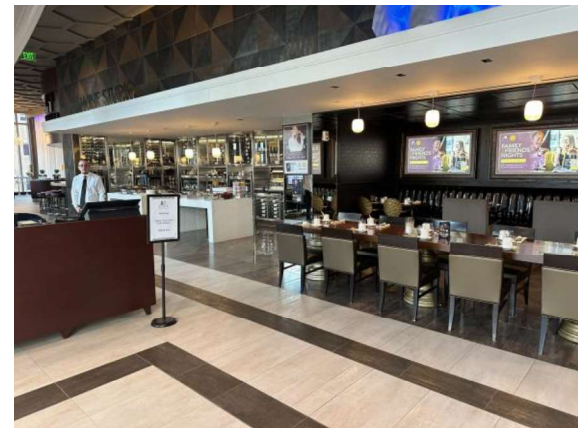
Follow the URL below for the 2025 SSCA program:

[SSCA-2025_Norfolk_Final-Program.pdf](#)

Carl Cates

President

Southern States Communication Association



1st Vice-President Patrick Wheaton

Norfolk 2025!

I hope that, like me, you are looking forward to convening in Norfolk, Virginia next month. My family has made the Norfolk area home since my father took command of a US Navy destroyer when I was 10 years old; my father and brother still live about 10 miles from downtown Norfolk. John Haas, Frances Brandau, Lauralee Shapiro-Grady, and I conducted a site visit to Hilton Norfolk The Main last September. Our conference space is located on one level. The hotel has three restaurants/bars, including a seafood restaurant, an Italian restaurant with a piano bar, and a roof garden/lounge with an extensive craft beer and wine list. The hotel is close to the Nauticus Maritime Museum and the USS Wisconsin battleship, the Waterside District (a venue of bars, restaurants, and live music), Town Point Park, the Douglas MacArthur Memorial and Museum, the Granby Street restaurant district, and the NorVa (a small live music venue).

I want to highlight a few special program items. Grab a cup of coffee and chat with the SSCA officers and with NCA's 1st Vice President Tina Harris on Thursday morning following the Executive Council Meeting and before the start of panels. On Thursday, the Southern Colloquium on Rhetoric is back for its second year post-COVID. Leland Spencer has put together a double session on "Fearless Speech." On Friday, the DEI Committee Keynote and Workshop will feature Heather Ashley Hayes on the topic "Mapping Accessibility in the Communication Discipline: Reframing Inclusion for the Future We Want." Also on Friday, political communication scholars will reflect on the 2024 US elections in a Vice President Spotlight panel. At the Awards Luncheon on Saturday, Kathie Turner, professor emerita, will deliver the Keynote Address.

I look forward to seeing everyone in Mermaid City, USA. And remember, the locals say "Naw-fuk," not "Nor-folk."

Pat Wheaton

1st Vice President



2nd Vice-President
Narissra Maria Punyanunt-Carter

We invite you to immerse yourself in the vibrant charm of Norfolk, Virginia, where a blend of delectable cuisine, fascinating museums, and lively entertainment venues promises to enrich your time beyond the conference hours.

I attended my first SSCA conference as a graduate student in 1997, and it has remained one of my most significant professional and disciplinary homes. The colleagues I have met here have provided invaluable support and guidance throughout my career. I hope you find SSCA to be as welcoming as I have. This is a community where individuals are genuinely eager to answer questions and share their insights on advancing quality scholarship.

Dr. Narissra Maria Punyanunt-Carter, Texas Tech University Second Vice-President of SSCA
Theodore Clevenger, Jr., Undergraduate Honors Conference Planner

Advocacy Listening Session and Open Forum
2025 April Convention
Reprinted from Fall Newsletter

What should be the role of SSCA in public advocacy? We need to examine the purpose and role of the organization as defined in Article II of our association and we need to consider what, if any, issues fall within our concern as an association. We also need to consider what limits may be placed on our advocacy by either our purpose or our legal status as a 501(c)(3) organization. Per the IRS, a 501(c)(3) organization "must be organized and operated exclusively for exempt purposes set forth in section 501(c)(3), and none of its earnings may inure to any private shareholder or individual. In addition, it may not be an action organization, i.e., it may not attempt to influence legislation as a substantial part of its activities, and it may not participate in any campaign activity for or against political candidates. For a full review of 501(c)(3) regulations, visit www.irs.gov.

35th Annual Theodore Clevenger, Jr.
Undergraduate Honors Conference

Incoming Executive Director Dr. Francis Brandau

Looking back over my career, one common thread stands out: my mentors and closest colleagues have all shared a deep dedication to the Southern States Communication Association. Dr. Hosman, Dr. Siltanen, Dr. Edwards, Dr. Ragsdale, and Dr. Thibodeaux have all served as SSCA presidents, and their leadership and mentorship have had a profound impact on me. Without SSCA, I wouldn't have the career I do today. The people I met through the association guided me, encouraged me, and helped me find a professional path that has, in turn, allowed me to mentor others. My experiences also gave me a deeper appreciation for the behind-the-scenes work that keeps academic organizations running and reinforced my commitment to service.

That's why it feels especially meaningful that my first conference as SSCA's Executive Director will be in Birmingham next year. Some of my most significant SSCA moments have happened in Birmingham: my first conference presentation at the Undergraduate Honors Conference in 1990, and the launch of Caring Connections in 2003—a fundraising initiative I created to support our association awards. The exception to the Birmingham "rule" was when I served as SSCA president in 2012 and the convention was held in my adopted home state of Texas, in San Antonio.

I am incredibly grateful for all that SSCA has given me, and I hope to continue the strong tradition set by my mentors. It is an honor to serve the association and its members, and I look forward to contributing to its future as Executive Director.

FRANCES BRANDAU Ph.D.
Sam Houston State University



SSCA 2025 Election Results

Incoming officers:

2nd Vice-President: Dr. Leland Spencer

**NCA Legislative Assembly Representative:
Dr. Antonio Spikes**

**NCA Nominating Committee Member:
Dr. Heather Ashley Hayes**

Their willingness to serve SSCA is greatly appreciated
and we look forward to a fruitful relationship working
together to serve our members' needs.



SSCA Institutional Members

University of Alabama – Communication Studies

Brenau University – Communication Department

East Tennessee State University – Communication
Studies and Storytelling

Georgia College & State University – Department of
Communication

Jacksonville State University

Mississippi State University – Department of
Communication

University of North Alabama – Department of
Communication

University of Tennessee, Knoxville – School of
Communication Studies

Valdosta State University – Communication Arts

Virginia Tech – School of Communication

