SOUTHERN STATES COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION

November 2026

SSCA Fall Newsletter



Looking Ahead

The Southern States Communication Association is looking forward to connecting with members at our **Midyear Business Meeting** in New Orleans on November 18, during the NCA Annual Convention. We hope you'll join us as we share association updates and look ahead to another exciting year for SSCA!

Speaking of looking ahead, we are excited about our **97th Annual Conference in Mobile, Alabama**, in **April 2027**! With *Curiosity* as our convention theme, Mobile offers the perfect setting to explore new ideas, reconnect with colleagues, and discover something unexpected.

Known for its Southern hospitality, rich history, fresh Gulf Coast seafood, and beautiful springtime azaleas, Mobile has something for everyone. From its historic downtown and vibrant cultural attractions to the natural beauty of Mobile Bay, there is plenty to spark your curiosity.

We look forward to seeing many of you in New Orleans this November and sharing more about Mobile in our spring newsletter. Until then, start making your plans to join us in April!

Curiosity is the theme for 2027!

We are exploring our *Curiosity* at The Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel, April 7th – 11th, 2027.

SSCA Officer Elections: Coming in January!

A Word from Our Officers

Thank you, SSCA Officers! Their time, energy, and commitment make a meaningful difference to our association and its members.

President – Narissra Punyanunt Carter



Thank you to everyone who joined us in Birmingham, Alabama! It was so wonderful to see so many familiar faces, meet new members, and watch everyone reconnect throughout the convention.

For me, one of the best parts of SSCA has always been the people. The conversations between sessions, catching up with colleagues and friends, meeting students and first-time attendees, and seeing the excitement surrounding everyone's research and ideas are what make our convention so special. Thank you to everyone who presented, volunteered, chaired a session, reviewed papers, mentored a student, or simply showed up and supported your fellow SSCA members. You are what makes this association such a wonderful community.

We are already looking forward to welcoming everyone to **Mobile, Alabama, in 2027**! There are some fun new things in the works for Mobile, and I think our members are really going to enjoy what we have planned. We are exploring some **new convention experiences**, including a sponsored selfie station, additional resources to help attendees discover Mobile, and convenient transportation options for exploring downtown. We are also adding some opportunities to help our incoming division and interest group leaders feel prepared and supported as they step into their new leadership roles.

These may seem like small additions, but they are all part of our **larger goal** of making SSCA a **welcoming, engaging, and enjoyable experience** for everyone who attends. Most of all, I hope you will make plans to join us in Mobile in 2027. I am excited about what is ahead for SSCA, and I am incredibly grateful to all of you who continue to give your time, energy, scholarship, and friendship to this association.

Thank you again for making Birmingham so memorable. I cannot wait to see everyone in Mobile!



1ST VICE PRESIDENT – LELAND G. SPENCER



I am excited to welcome everyone to Mobile in April as we convene under the theme of "*Curiosity*"! Bring your ideas and your questions. Bring provocations and arguments. Bring fully formed theses and half-baked musings. We all grow when we explore our curiosity together.

More than 300 people have submitted competitive papers, panels, posters, and works-in-progress for consideration for this conference. The review process is ongoing as I write, and we expect to have **decisions by December**.

I thank the many division and interest group officers who are engaged in the planning process and everyone who has completed reviews. Peer review makes our research better!

2ND VICE PRESIDENT - ELETRA GILCHRIST-PETTY



The **37th annual Theodore Clevenger Undergraduate Honors Conference** (UHC) will take place during the Southern States Communication Association's 97th Annual Convention in **Mobile, AL, April 7-11, 2027**, at The Renaissance Mobile Riverview Plaza Hotel. UHC provides an opportunity for undergraduate students to present research and engage in conversations about scholarship and future research topics with faculty and other students. Goals of UHC include supporting excellence in undergraduate scholarship and creative activity, providing opportunities for networking, and allowing students the chance to explore graduate study options.

Undergraduate students are invited to submit papers, digital, and/or applied projects for UHC on topics relevant to the study of human or mass communication. Submissions are welcome from all sub-disciplines and methodological approaches in the field of communication. We especially welcome papers or projects that connect to the conference theme, "Curiosity," or PR campaign projects relevant to the city of Mobile, AL. Undergraduate students from all types of institutions are invited to submit. Please feel free to **share the flyer** that will be sent with the newsletter.

The **submission deadline** for the UHC is **December 16, 2026**, at 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time. Full details are available by clicking here, or visiting the SSCA website > UHC.

We also solicit REVIEWERS for the UHC submissions. If you are a scholar available to review the UHC submissions, please send your name to Eletra.Gilchrist@uah.edu. Your service to the Association is greatly needed and appreciated.

Executive Director – Frances Brandau



As we move through another busy fall semester, I hope everyone is finding moments to recharge and reconnect. While our annual convention may be the highlight of the SSCA calendar, there's plenty happening throughout the year to keep our association moving forward.

We've been busy working to strengthen the association and improve the membership experience. One of our ongoing projects has been updating and improving our website to make information and resources easier to find. For example, we have the **Undergraduate Honors Conference (UHC**) on the ribbon across our webpage. There, UHC presenters will find a dedicated registration page for undergraduate presenters, and a new ***Know Before You Go*** guide designed to help students feel more confident and prepared for their conference experience.

I also want to give a **special shout-out** to **Elizabeth Hanson Smith**, who has devoted countless hours behind the scenes to improving our website. Much of the work involved in maintaining and updating a website goes unnoticed, but Elizabeth's dedication, patience, and attention to detail have been invaluable. Thank you, Elizabeth, for everything you do for SSCA!

In the meantime, I hope many of you will join us for our **mid-year Business Meeting** on Wednesday, November 18, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m., during the NCA convention in New Orleans. The meeting will be in Edgewood AB on the fourth floor of the Sheraton. This is an opportunity to hear updates about the association and participate in conversations about SSCA's future.

Finally, **thank you** to everyone who contributes their time, energy, and talents to SSCA. Whether you serve in a leadership position, review submissions, mentor students, or simply welcome someone new at the convention, your contributions matter. SSCA has always been an association built on relationships and a willingness to serve. I'm grateful to be part of that tradition and look forward to continuing our work together.

Southern Communication Journal – Joshua Guitar



I am pleased to announce that I am accepting and processing manuscripts as **Editor-Elect** of *Southern Communication Journal*. Sponsored by the Southern States Communication Association, one of the four regional organizations connected to the National Communication Association, *Southern Communication Journal* has a proud history of featuring novel scholarship from across the field of Communication. Per our aims and scope, *Southern Communication Journal* maintains a reputation of publishing "original scholarship that makes significant contributions to understanding the processes and consequences of human communication" without being "limited with regard to topic, methodological approach, or theoretical perspective."

I am determined to continue this tradition. Communication is unlike any other field in academia with its robust diversity of philosophical, theoretical, and methodological approaches. I am enthusiastic about ensuring our journal fosters the invaluable multiplicity that undergirds us as a collective of Communication scholars.

Under my editorship and following the standards of past editors, I am dedicated to the highest ethical practices of academic publishing. I intend to augment the reputation of *Southern Communication Journal* while appreciating how much labor the authors, reviewers, editorial board members, and administrative staff perform to ensure the journal's success. Moreover, I am committed to efficiency and transparency. Publication in *Southern Communication Journal* will remain competitive; however, I can promise that the review process and my editorial decisions will be respectful, timely, and honest.

Given its seeming ubiquity in recent years, it is imperative I also address the usage of artificial intelligence. Across our review and publication processes, multiple safeguards will be utilized to identify and reject works of plagiarism, including manuscripts which have been generated by artificial intelligence. If you plan to submit to *Southern Communication Journal*, please do so in **your voice** out of respect for everyone's labor and time throughout the review process. In this, *Southern Communication Journal* can continue to feature scholarship that centers on human experiences and expertise.

I know that *Southern Communication Journal* is one of many reputable publications that authors can consider for their work. It is not lost on me that many researchers have had to be more judicious in recent years with where they publish their work given the social and political circumstances we are facing. I assure you, *Southern Communication Journal* welcomes all scholarship that aligns with our broader mission, which includes submissions from historically underrepresented scholars and scholars whose work interrogates the normative power dynamics that obstruct freedom of expression and the equity of political voice. Thus, while I cannot allay all the sociopolitical pressures we are experiencing as academics, I can at least reiterate that regardless of your positionality, **your work is welcome** at *Southern Communication Journal*.

The sustained success of the *Southern Communication Journal* results from the intentional care of a wide collaboration of scholars. I am grateful for the opportunity to represent this successful past and help provide space for moving our field forward. I extend my deep gratitude to the Executive Committee of the Southern States Communication Association for entrusting me with this role and to our outgoing Editor, **Rebekah Fox**, for the irreplaceable mentorship she has provided through this transition. I am eager to ensure that *Southern Communication Journal* remains a source of pride for the Southern States Communication Association, and a journal that scholars across the field of Communication readily cite and publish.

Especially for those who have considered submitting to *Southern Communication Journal* in the past, we have **instituted some changes for submissions**. First, we will be moving to **format-free** submissions. While accepted manuscripts will need to be formatted according to APA requirements prior to publication, initial submissions can adhere to any reputable style guide. Second, we will be increasing the maximum manuscript length to 10,000 words, all inclusive. *Southern Communication Journal* previously required that manuscripts be no longer than 25 pages.

Please visit the webpage (found here) of *Southern Communication Journal* to learn more about our aims and scope, submission requirements, double-anonymized peer review process, and history. My editorship will officially span the 2027, 2028, and 2029 volumes of *Southern Communication Journal*. You can email me directly at southerncommjournaleditor@gmail.com should you have any questions or items you wish to discuss. Thank you for considering *Southern Communication Journal* for your scholarship. I look forward to working with everyone over the next few years.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR- NAKIA WELCH



What an exciting time it has been stepping into the role of your **Strategic Communication Director**! The past few months have been busy but incredibly rewarding. I'm excited to support SSCA's planning, marketing, hospitality and logistics, and communication efforts, all with the goal of enhancing the membership experience. Our team has been working behind the scenes on initiatives to strengthen what SSCA offers throughout the year while continuing to make our annual convention an event members look forward to.

Here are a few highlights:

The countdown to **the SSCA 2027 Annual Convention in Mobile, Alabama**, is underway! Working with our Resource Committee, we have developed pricing guidelines and expanded sponsorship opportunities for individuals, organizations, and businesses interested in supporting SSCA. If you know a potential sponsor, please send them our way! Details about sponsorship opportunities and the convention are available on the SSCA website.

Considerable time and effort has been spent transitioning the **SSCA website** to a new hosting organization. We retained the familiar layout to ease the transition while creating opportunities for future improvements in usability, engagement, and accessibility. More enhancements are planned, so stay tuned! The website is a treasure trove of information about SSCA's history and activities, and we welcome suggestions for making it even more valuable. You can also **help by keeping your member profile current** and notifying us of changes, particularly if your information appears on the website, such as committee chairs and other leadership positions.

One project I'm particularly excited about combines preserving our history with preparing for **SSCA's 100th anniversary**. I'm pleased to be working with our Executive Director to develop the **Awards Namesake Biopic Project**.

Each year, we present awards honoring giants in our discipline, but how much do we know about the individuals behind those names? Through this project, we hope to create short biographical profiles highlighting their careers, accomplishments, contributions to the communication discipline, and service to SSCA. We want future generations to understand not only what these individuals accomplished, but also who they were and why their legacies matter.

We need your help! If you have photographs, personal stories, favorite memories, funny moments, or experiences involving any of our awards namesakes, please share them! These personal touches will help bring their stories to life, particularly for members who never had the opportunity to know them. **Please send photographs, stories, memories, or other information to StratComm@ssca.net**.

As we approach SSCA's centennial, this project offers a meaningful opportunity to preserve our history, celebrate our people, and share their legacies with future generations of communication scholars, educators, and professionals.

There is much happening at SSCA, with even more to come! I'm excited about what we're building together and look forward to keeping you informed, connected, and engaged along the way!

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT – PATRICK G. WHEATON



It is **good** to be the **Past President**. My duties are much less stressful than in previous years. I can report that I have been in communication with the members of the **Nominating Committee** over the past several months as we brainstormed potential nominees, solicited nominees, and ultimately approved a slate of nominees. Following tradition, I will keep the slate of nominees secret and reveal it at the business meeting in November at NCA. I am excited that we have two wonderful candidates for both **Second Vice President** and **NCA Legislative Committee**. I hope you will agree when you hear those names on November 18th.

In other news, I hope to reveal an updated Leadership Manual for the Association, a revision of the Officers' Manual edited by **Wendy Atkins-Sayre** a few years back. This new Leadership Manual will also include guidance for Division and Interest Group leaders. Thank you to those who have helped me make revisions based on what we should do and what we *actually* do.

Patrick G. Wheaton, Ph.D.
Immediate Past President, Southern States Communication Association

NCA NOMINATIONS

SSCA congratulates **Pat Wheaton**, of Georgia Southern University, on his **nomination** for **NCA 2nd Vice President**. NCA elections take place in December. If elected, Pat would follow in the footsteps of past SSCA presidents who then went on to lead NCA, including **Beverly Whitaker Long, Michael Osborn, Dale Leathers, Jim Applegate, Roseann Mandziuk**, and **Tina Harris**. If elected, Pat would plan the 2028 NCA Convention in Indianapolis and preside at the 2029 Boston convention. Pat's written and video vision statement for NCA can be found at https://www.natcom.org/2026/10/14/announcing-the-2026-nca-election-slate-of-candidates/

SSCA also congratulates SSCA member **Samantha Guajardo**, of The University of Texas--Rio Grande Valley, on her **nomination** to serve on NCA's **Leadership Development Committee.**

If you are an NCA member, remember to vote!

visit Mobile Alabama

BORN TO CELEBRATE

