

Convention and Meetings Department

Submitted by LaShawn Duckett, Director of Convention and Meetings

I am pleased to present the Convention Department's quarterly report to the National Communication Association's Executive Committee. This report outlines our preparations for the upcoming annual convention, scheduled for November 21-24, 2024, in New Orleans, and highlights other significant activities and initiatives undertaken by the Conventions & Meetings Department.

1. Annual Convention Overview

The 2024 Annual Convention in New Orleans is anticipated to be a highly engaging event, with 3,600 attendees expected. As of November 8, we have successfully registered 3,511 participants.

Key details include:

- **Theme:** "Communication for Greater Regard"
- **General Sessions:**
 - **Carroll C. Arnold Lecture:** *[Beyond Us Versus Them: Communication, Community, and Empathy as Imperatives for the Betterment of Human Society](#)*
 - Speaker: Carolyn Calloway-Thomas, Ph.D.
 - **Opening Session:** *[Greater Regard for Academic Freedom](#)*
 - Speakers:
 - Walid Afifi, University of California, Santa Barbara
 - Shardé M. Davis, University of Connecticut
 - Sarah Amira de la Garza, Arizona State University
 - Bryan McCann, Louisiana State University
 - Julie-Ann Scott-Pollock, University of North Carolina, Wilmington
 - Siena Vincent, Tulane University
- **Workshops and Panels:** A diverse lineup of 979 sessions featuring over 4,956 unique names in the program.
- **Marketing Efforts:** We have actively promoted the convention through various channels, including monthly newsletters, social media campaigns, COMMNotes, and targeted email blasts.

2. Sponsorship & Exhibits Initiatives

This year, we introduced new sponsorship and advertising offerings. We've secured our first sponsor for the **Graduate School Open House (GSOH)**, enhancing the event's visibility and engagement and approximately seven advertisers for the convention mobile app.

Annual Convention Sponsors:

- Kendall Hunt – Day of Service
- Taylor & Francis – Presidential Address Awards Presentation
- Waterhouse Family Institute – Opening Session
- Bedford St. Martin's/Macmillan Learning – Headshots
- LSU Manship School of Mass Communication – Graduate School Open House

Additionally, we have confirmed 22 exhibitors (11% increase from 2023), 76 institution participants (9% decrease from 2023 due to decreased space) for the GSOH and 10 Career Fair participants for the convention, providing a robust exhibit hall for attendees to explore.

3. Enhancements and New Initiatives

We have introduced several new initiatives to enhance attendee engagement and experience:

- **Special Welcome Event:** In collaboration with New Orleans & Company, we are excited to provide an airport band to welcome our attendees. The band will perform on Wednesday, November 20th, from 9:00

A.M. to 6:00 P.M., with a one-hour lunch break from 1:00 P.M. to 2:00 P.M. This initiative aims to create a warm and festive atmosphere for our guests as they arrive in the city.

- **New Student Lounge:** A dedicated space for students to relax, recharge, and share experiences, fostering a sense of community.
- **Student Volunteer Meal Vouchers:** We launched a *Sponsor a Student Volunteer Meal* program to address food insecurity. During registration, 99 convention registrants expressed interest, with 13 of them contributing to 2-6 meals each, benefiting a total of 179 students. Each student volunteer will receive a \$15 meal voucher upon checking in at the convention.
- **Student Volunteer Meal Vouchers:** We implemented a Sponsor a Student Meal program to address food insecurity. Interested sponsors can contribute during registration. Each student volunteer will receive a \$15 meal voucher when checking in at the convention.
- **Volunteer Manual and Orientation:** We are creating a comprehensive volunteer manual and will provide a new virtual orientation for volunteers before the convention.
- **Dedicated Lunchtime:** Introduced a lunch period with no sessions scheduled, allowing attendees to take breaks and enjoy food kiosks in the exhibit hall.
- **Camp NCA Enhancements:** Hired a new vendor, Kiddie Corp, and implemented feedback from last year to improve the experience for our younger attendees.
- **Early Morning Tea Chats:** We have added informal networking opportunities to kickstart each day. Discussions include *Death Café* and *Mindfulness, Meditation & Well-being Café*.
- **Virtual Learning Opportunities (VLOs):** Implemented as a members-only benefit, offering seven programs between May and October. VLOs encourage vibrant, year-long conversations around the convention theme. Types included:
 - Masterclass (less than one hour)
 - Intensive (two to three hours)
 - Consortium (four hours)
- **NCA Hub/Booth:** Continuing to enhance our booth, providing a space for attendees to connect with NCA staff, learn about available resources, demo our new website, take headshots, and win prizes. This hub is a great opportunity for students, educators, and professionals in the field of communication to stay updated on the latest developments in research, teaching, and practice.
- **Digital Game: Communication Connection: Match & Remember:** A fun, interactive game designed to facilitate engagement among attendees.
- **Phasing Out Print Programs:** To promote sustainability, we will provide print programs only to those who have requested them during registration.
- **Abstract Management System:** Continue implementing a new abstract management system and online program to streamline submissions, reviews, and program information.
- **Convention App:** Implementing the 2024 convention app to facilitate networking and information access for attendees.

4. Staffing Updates

In August, we welcomed a new Convention and Meetings Associate, **Aliyah Hyman**. Aliyah brings extensive experience from her previous roles as Meetings Manager at the American Association for Justice and in Event/Client Services at Shepard Exposition Services, our show decorator. Her expertise will be invaluable as we move forward with our events.

5. Strategic Meetings and Future Planning

To ensure the success of the 2024 Convention, I have engaged in regular strategic weekly meetings with the First Vice President, Executive Director, Convention & Meetings Associate, Communications Department, and contractors and vendors to coordinate convention planning.

Additionally, we successfully planned the following events:

- **Annual Leadership Retreat & Executive Committee Meeting:** Held January 18-20 in Washington, DC.
- **Annual August Executive Committee Meeting:** Conducted on August 2-3 in Washington, DC.

We have initiated planning for future events:

- **2025 Annual Convention:** Instituted regular meetings with the Second Vice President to align on the 2025 convention logistics and programming.
- **Site Visits for Potential 2030 Convention Locations:** Visits were conducted to explore options, and the findings will be presented to the Convention Committee at its November meeting.
- **2025 Annual Leadership Retreat** and **Annual August Executive Committee Meeting** are in the early planning stages.

Conclusion

In summary, the Conventions Department has made significant strides in preparing for the upcoming annual convention and other key initiatives. I appreciate the NCA team's ongoing support and look forward to our continued collaboration.

Membership Department

Submitted by Arnyae Neal, Director of Membership and Membership Services

Tech Updates

- In 2024, a contract was signed to implement Fonteva, an Association Management System (AMS) that will replace Impexium, which has been in place with NCA for over 8 years. The new AMS will allow for:
 - Use of cloud-based Salesforce
 - Enhanced efficiency and productivity
 - Deeper insights into member data
 - Streamlined financial management
- This system will also be integrated with other platforms that NCA uses, allowing for improved staff workflows and an enhanced member experience.
- A new system will be implemented in 2025 along with the new website

Retention, Recruiting, Engagement

- The Membership team added an exit survey to the renewal cycle to better gauge why members are not renewing. This information has been shared with staff directors for visibility and awareness of how we can all think about growing and enhancing NCA's membership community.
- The Membership team, along with the Communication, Education, and Research team, launched NCA's inaugural Student Week during the spring. The event was a success. The team is collaborating on the 2025 Student Week.

By the Numbers

The official count happens in early January of every year.

- Total Individual Membership is 5,660 currently (as of 10/29/2024)
 - 3% increase from October 2023
 - Department Membership has slightly decreased to 250
 - Student Honor Societies have increased to 473 for Lambda Pi Eta and 28 for Sigma Chi Eta
-

Department Report: Research, Publications & Professional Advancement, Oct. 28, 2024

Submitted by Dane S. Claussen, Director of Research, Publications, and Professional Advancement

Staff Update

Dr. Rachael Purtell, a 2023 Ph.D. (communication studies) graduate of West Virginia University, was hired in mid-April as Research Associate after Monica Yang moved to Strategic Projects Associate on Jan. 1. The transition went smoothly (including catching up, since the department has had a full-time second employee for only about nine of the last 21 months) and Dr. Purtell has been doing excellent work.

Journals

John Sloop, Dane, Fiona Richmond (Taylor & Francis) and/or Sophie Wade (T&F) have had 10 annual meetings with journal editors by Oct. 31 with one or two more at the NCA Convention. Meetings show smooth working relationships between the Publications Council, NCA National Office, Taylor & Francis and editors, except for some issues with T&F's copyediting/ proofreading. All but one journal was published on-time (or close to it) during 2024. The problem of almost all NCA journals receiving large numbers of manuscripts that are irrelevant to the journals' missions/ scopes. Applications for new Editors-Elect are due January 31 as usual. Revised versions of NCA's Editors Manual and NCA's Publications Council Manual were completed and distributed in the Spring. In June, NCA co-sponsored with T&F a two-hour reviewer training session on Zoom for scholars of all disciplines in Africa.

Summer Programs

The NCA Doctoral Honors Seminar was held at Utah and the Institute for Faculty Development was held at Duquesne, both in June, followed by the Midcareer Scholars' Writing Retreat at Auburn in July. Dane attended all three. The DHS ran at capacity and IFFD had solid attendance, while MSWR, for which a host was not found until March, had low participation. DHS and IFFD will be held in 2025; the projected MSWR and Department Chairs' Summer Institute were both unfunded by the Executive Committee.

Rachael organized and moderated September's Public Program about workplace dissent, with five experts. As an experiment, it was held on a Saturday, with 100+ registrants and about 25 attendees.

Grant Updates

By the Sept. 1 deadline, NCA received 12 qualified applications for Research Development Grants, 4 for Advancing the Discipline Grants, and none for Dale Leathers Fund grants. Five qualified applications for NCA's new Pedagogy grant also were received.

Student Caucus Travel Grant applications closed with 460 qualified student applicants who will receive about \$180 each in gift cards for their convention attendance expenses.

Website Content

The 2022-2023 [Academic Jobs Listings in Communication Report](#) was published, and the 2023-24 report can be published in January when Fall 2024 enrollment figures are available. The 2021-22 and 2022-23 Profile of the Communication Doctorate reports have been written and should be released soon after the convention. Dane and Rachael completed a comprehensive review of all academic and professional content (excluding convention, membership, and governance content) on the NCA website in preparation for the NCA's new website. Dane and Rachael each wrote articles for the NCA's *Spectra* magazine.

An updated and greatly expanded communication PhD programs database, developed in conjunction with the Teaching & Learning Council is almost complete and will be included in the new NCA website launch. The NCA is re-launching and re-imaging its C-Briefs reports as Administrative Snapshots, with a new design and focus on the highest quality data sources of use to chairs, directors/deans, and provosts. The first one should be posted during November.

External Meetings

Dane attended 2024's two semi-annual board meetings of the Council of Communication Associations—as invited guests, and organized and moderated a CCA panel about open data sets at August's convention of the Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication. (NCA previously was a CCA member but discontinued its

membership several years ago.) He also represented NCA and the discipline at the October meeting of the American Association of Arts & Sciences about its humanities survey.

Dane once again participated in lobbying Congress for increased (or maintained) funding for humanities and social science research through the National Humanities Alliance and Consortium of Social Science Associations. He also has cooperated with the US Department of Labor's Occupational Information Network's data-gathering on communication jobs, and the American Academy of Arts & Sciences on its surveys of humanities departments.