

March 29, 2019

Dr. Star Muir, President
National Communication Association
George Mason University
Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Dr. Trevor Parry-Giles, Executive Director
National Communication Association
1765 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Star and Trevor:

Since receiving Trevor's email announcing the Executive Committee's decision regarding the selection of Distinguished Scholars, I have waited to see if my anger would dissipate with time. Instead, the reverse has occurred.

I have been a member of NCA for 51 years and have had the privilege of serving the organization as president, director of two boards, member of the Legislative Assembly for multiple terms, chair of a division, and chair of several committees and task forces. I have seen the Association up close. It often has made good decisions. Sometimes it has made errors but has had the good sense to correct them. I hope that good sense will yet be evident in this case, which I must say is one of the biggest mistakes I have seen.

Frankly, I do not know which reading of your actions is worse: that the EC has decided that I and over 75 of my most respected colleagues are prejudiced individuals who do not share NCA's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity; or that the EC has decided that we are incompetent to identify and select a group of diverse scholars from the pool of nominees. The fact that not a single member of the Association (including the EC members themselves) chose to place any such diverse scholars into the Association-wide nomination pool seems to have escaped the EC altogether.

Consequently, the effect of your actions is, first, to issue an egregious insult to a group of scholars who up until now have been regarded as the intellectual leaders of the Association. The claim that the DS selection will now "resemble" the other NCA awards is a red herring, as the Distinguished Scholar Award was never intended to resemble other awards. What it does resemble is the process by which those who have achieved the rank of full professor evaluate colleagues for tenure and promotion.

Your insult to the Distinguished Scholars is compounded by your failure to consult with any of us in advance, so that you were not aware of the depth of attention we have devoted to this topic over the years or the measures we have proposed to produce a more diverse pool of nominees without distorting the selection process. The fact that you did not consult with Mark Knapp, the founder and principal donor of this award, and that you gave no consideration to his wishes in this matter, does not inspire confidence in NCA's stewardship of philanthropic gifts. This is an additional problem.

I fear that your action, in addition to offending the current Distinguished Scholars, will compromise the selection process itself, since no scholarly credentials are stipulated for members of the new selection committee that the Leadership Development Council is charged to appoint, and that selection committee is charged specifically to name a diverse group of Distinguished Scholars, not as the happy byproduct of fair review of all candidates in a rich pool but as an a priori instruction – the only such specific instruction that is stipulated in Trevor’s report to us.

There is still time to correct this disastrous error -- by restoring the practice that prevailed before the EC’s action, by taking seriously the recommendations proposed by the Distinguished Scholars at their meeting in Salt Lake City, and by apologizing to the Distinguished Scholars whom your action has alienated from the Association. Toward the goal of resolving these matters, a delegation of Distinguished Scholars will be ready to meet with the EC, to develop more fully the proposals crafted in Salt Lake City, or to act in whatever other manner might be helpful. If it is the judgment of the EC that the necessary restorative actions cannot be taken in time, then we should put this award on hiatus for 2019 and restore the former program for 2020 and beyond.

Despite the intensity of my convictions on this matter, I have not yet decided what actions I will take personally in response. I hope that I will not need to. There are metaphysical problems with an attempt to resign either as a past president or as a life member. But there are other tangible ways in which I can make clear how dissonant the EC’s action is with my own values and principles. I hope instead that the weight of the argument and the recognition of the intense ill will you have aroused will impel you and your colleagues to take the appropriate corrective action without delay.

Sincerely,

David Zarefsky

April 4, 2019

Dr. Star Muir, President
National Communication Association
George Mason University
Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Dr. Trevor Parry-Giles, Executive Director
National Communication Association
1765 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Star and Trevor:

The undersigned NCA Distinguished Scholars signed the collective letter dated April 2, 2019, objecting to changes in the method of selecting Distinguished Scholars, and we endorse its contents.

We are writing now to indicate that we *also* associate ourselves with the viewpoints expressed in David Zarefsky's letter to you dated March 29, 2019. We share the emotional intensity and sense of anger conveyed in that letter. Some but not all of us believe that it represents our views more accurately than does the collective letter, although we were happy to sign that as well.

Please share this letter with the members of the NCA Executive Committee.

Sincerely,
(names listed alphabetically)

James R. Andrews	Frans H. van Eemeren	Peter R. Monge
Ronald C. Arnett	Carolyn S. Ellis	Dennis K. Mumby
Wayne Beach	Robert M. Entman	Jon F. Nussbaum
W. Lance Bennett	Gail T. Fairhurst	Gerry F. Philipson
Thomas W. Benson	Mary Anne Fitzpatrick	Marshall Scott Poole
Carole Blair	Howard Giles *	Linda L. Putnam
Arthur P. Bochner	G. Thomas Goodnight	Michael E. Roloff
John Waite Bowers	Dennis S. Gouran	Edward Schiappa
Stephen H. Browne *	Alan G. Gross	David R. Seibold
Judee K. Burgoon	Lawrence Grossberg	Herbert W. Simons
Patrice M. Buzzanell *	Gerard A. Hauser *	Sandi W. Smith *
Joseph N. Cappella	Robert Hariman	Cynthia Stohl
Donal Carbaugh	Roderick P. Hart *	Mary E. Stuckey *
Clifford G. Christians *	J. Michael Hogan	Joseph Turow *
Noshir Contractor	Michael J. Hyde	Karen Tracy
François Cooren	Robert L. Ivie	Anita L. Vangelisti
Robert T. Craig	Mark L. Knapp	Ellen A. Wartella
John A. Daly	John L. Lucaites	Barbie Zelizer *
Stanley A. Deetz *	Martin J. Medhurst	
James Price Dillard *		

* Removed by request of the signatory, June 2019