**Statement on Academic Freedom, Faculty Governance, and Justice**

In response to a number of hostile actions implemented by the State of Florida affecting academic freedom, faculty governance, and justice, the executive council and membership of the Southern States Communication Association (SSCA) affirm that in a democratic society any teaching, scholarship, and efforts to secure human rights cannot be constrained by state interference. SSCA has long centered the agency of institutions of higher learning and the value of justice in the pursuit of contributing to the common good. Recent policies in the State of Florida threaten the very foundation of not only academia, but also of the Communication discipline and its eternal validation of human beings across intersectional subject positions including, but not limited to: race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexuality, spiritual traditions, dis/abilities, subsistence challenges and class, international origins, education, language groups, and citizenship/asylum status.

This year we gather in the State of Florida based on a years-long arrangement through which we are contractually obligated. However, the SSCA executive council and membership have actively leveraged this challenging space and complicated moment to celebrate academic freedom, to actuate faculty governance, and to reaffirm our commitment to justice. To this end, many of our division and interest group planners have organized sessions that will provide opportunities to share ideas, networks, and tools to manage and assail the current socio-political landscape. Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee Chair Antonio Spikes is hosting Dr. Mark Hopson to lead a workshop on "teaching for survival" in a state-threatened academic landscape, including how to anchor DEI in content and practice. President Tina Harris is sponsoring a spotlight on the transformative power of communication and its potential for making SSCA an exemplary institution for inclusivity. And Vice President Ann Burnette has planned three spotlights dedicated to directly addressing how we can engage in our teaching, research, and justice work given the travails of higher education in this moment.

SSCA renews its pledge to treasure academic freedom, support faculty governance, and cherish justice as values this year, as in past years, and well into the future. More than that, SSCA commits to authentically acting on these values despite the threats of state-sanctioned policies, such as those currently deployed by the State of Florida, to the democratic arts central to and nurtured by the Communication discipline.

*Submitted by Jason Edward Black and Kathleen J. Turner*

*Affirmed by the Administrative Committee of*

*the Southern States Communication Association*