

Mass Communication Division

SSCA

Meeting minutes from April 6, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 4:25 p.m. The current secretary/vice chair elect was not able to attend the conference, so minutes were taken by Melissa Smith, the current vice chair of the division.

The minutes from the 2023 meeting were unanimously approved. Barry Smith, the division chair, presented a report that outlined the new constitutional amendments that had been voted into effect. He also announced that Frances Brandeau is the new Executive Director of the organization, and that she will shadow John Haas, the current director, for the next year. Smith also noted that the location for the 2028 conference had not yet been decided because the Houston site proved to be too expensive for hotel and food charges. Members were told that the committee was looking at either Memphis or Little Rock and that voting on those locations would be held via email after the conference.

Melissa Smith reported on planning for the Frisco conference, stating that the division had eight paper submissions, and four of those were accepted. The division had two panel submissions, and both of those were accepted. There was one poster submission to Mass Communication, but it was not accepted. The division also co-sponsored one roundtable with the American Society for the History of Rhetoric Interest Group that was titled “Inclusion, Exclusion, Dissolution: A Roundtable Discussion of the 2024 U.S. Elections.”

The Top Student Paper award was given to Amy Whiteside of the University of Arkansas for her paper titled, “How to Win Friends and Influence Elections: The January 6th Insurrection and Populist Parasocial Relationships.” The Top Faculty Paper award went to Cheryl Maiorca, of the University of Nebraska, Omaha, for her paper titled, “‘Teachers Don’t Vote’: How Communicating Belonging Helped Shaped Oklahoma Teachers’ Intentions to Engage in Politics.”

In new business, it was noted that Umisha KC will be planning the division for next year’s conference in Norfolk, Va. She will be sending out a call for papers by Sept. 15. The theme is “Anchors and Anchoring Communication,” which should be reflected in submissions for the 2025 conference.

There was a general discussion about fragmentation within the discipline, as well as the challenge of attracting more Mass Communication submissions for next year’s conference. The fragmentation within the discipline, which is echoed in the growing number of divisions within SSCA, creates a challenge as scholarship becomes more siloed and there is a loss of cross-pollination of ideas and scholarship. It also often results in papers that once would have been submitted to Mass Communication instead being targeted to other divisions. Those in attendance were encouraged to submit papers and panels to the division, as well as co-sponsor panels with other divisions.

A question was raised about creating scholar Spotlight panels or participating in Vice Presidential Spotlight events when they are planned. Barry Smith said the idea will be passed along to next year's planner.

It was also reported that next year's First Vice President, Pat Wheaton, has been asked to "scatter" business meetings across the schedule, instead of having them only on Friday and Saturday evenings. The idea is to make them more accessible for people who belong to multiple divisions or interest groups, but who can only make two meetings given the current structure. During the Executive Council meeting several people inquired about having virtual business meetings, but it was noted that would call for an amendment to the Constitution and to the by-laws of most divisions or interest groups.

In other new business, Chris Toula of Sam Houston State was elected to the Secretary/Vice Chair position. He will be secretary at next year's conference and then be the planner for the division for the 2026 conference.

Those in attendance were encouraged to send nominations for SSCA offices to Barry Smith.

It was noted that the Osborn Reception would begin at 6:30 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:21 p.m.