

**Southern States Communication Association  
Annual Convention | “Comm-AI-nity”  
April 8-12, 2026 | Birmingham, Alabama**

**Argumentation and Forensics Division**

**Vice Chair & Program Planner: Brian Lain (Brian.Lain@unt.edu)**

The Argumentation and Forensics Division invites paper and panel proposals for competitive selection for the SSCA 2026 Conference to be held in Birmingham, Alabama. We especially welcome submissions that address the convention theme, “Com-AI-nity.”

The division welcomes papers, panels, posters, and workshops across the spectrum of argumentation (e.g., theory, criticism, pedagogy) and competitive forensics/speech and debate (e.g., pedagogy, history, praxis, culture, forensics across the curriculum, Urban Debate Leagues, public debate formats). Non-traditional formats and experimental events such as roundtable discussions and performance showcases are encouraged. All competitive papers submitted will be considered for the Division’s Top Paper Award.

The division especially welcomes submissions of all formats that address any of the following matters:

1. **Argumentation Pedagogy:** Best practices, curriculum, activities, and other pedagogy-related matters for teaching argumentation and persuasion in a classroom environment or in a competitive debate or speech context.
2. **Perspectives on The Status of Argumentation:** Sharing, comparing, and contrasting perspectives on the function and role of argumentation in the digital age from either a competitive forensics or other background.

**In addition, in accordance with the conference theme, the division welcomes submissions that address any of the following:**

1. **AI in Debate and Argumentation**
  - **AI as a Debate Partner:** Exploring the use of AI as a tool for practicing and enhancing debate skills.
  - **Automated Argument Analysis:** How AI can analyze and evaluate arguments in real-time.
  - **Ethical Considerations of AI in Debate:** Addressing the ethical implications of using AI in argumentation and debate settings.
2. **AI in Speech and Forensics**
  - **AI in Forensics Preparation:** The role of AI in generating speeches, arguments and assisting in case preparation.
  - **AI and Evidence Analysis:** How AI can assist in the analysis and interpretation of evidence used in various events.
3. **AI and Community Engagement**
  - **AI for Public Deliberation:** Leveraging AI to facilitate public discussions and community decision-making.
  - **AI in Online Debate Platforms:** Enhancing online debate platforms with AI to improve user experience and argument quality.
  - **Building Inclusive AI Communities:** Ensuring AI tools in argumentation and debate are accessible and inclusive.
4. **AI and Education**
  - **AI in Argumentation Education:** Integrating AI tools into educational curricula to teach argumentation and critical thinking skills.

- **AI-Driven Feedback Systems:** Using AI to provide personalized feedback on students' arguments, speeches, and debates.
  - **Virtual Debate/Speech Coaches:** The potential of AI as virtual coaches for forensics teams and individuals.
5. **Future of AI in Argumentation**
    - **Predictive Argumentation Models:** Developing AI models that can predict the outcomes of debates and arguments.
    - **AI and the Evolution of Argument:** How AI is changing the landscape of argumentation studies and practices.
    - **AI in Cross-Cultural Argumentation:** Exploring how AI can bridge cultural differences in argumentation styles and practices.
  6. **Case Studies and Practical Applications**
    - **Real-World Applications of AI in Debate:** Case studies showcasing successful implementations of AI in debate and argumentation.
    - **AI in Political Debates:** Analyzing the impact of AI on political debates and public discourse.

#### Submission Types:

**Town Hall Debate:** The division sponsors the SSCA Town Hall Debate and invites topic suggestions. Debate topics should relate to the conference theme, Anchors and Anchoring Communication.” All topic submissions should address the conference theme of “Anchors and Anchoring”.

The division welcomes undergraduate and graduate students to participate as debaters; and encourages senior-level graduate students and faculty to participate as moderators and coordinators. Those interested in debating, moderating, or coordinating the event should contact the division planner, Brian Lain (brian.lain@unt.edu) no later than September 1st, 2025. Topic submissions should also be received via email to the division planner no later than September 1st, 2025.

**Student Speaking Spotlight:** The division wishes to reintroduce an event held at previous conventions in which students present original speeches in the form of an exhibition panel. For this event, the division especially welcomes the following types of pieces: persuasive speeches, policy speeches, communication analysis/criticism pieces, and other speech types that relate to argumentation. Those interested in speaking at, moderating, or coordinating the event should contact the division planner, Brian Lain (brian.lain@unt.edu) no later than September 1st, 2025. Coaches/instructors are strongly encouraged to contact the division planner with nominations for interested students. **The division also welcomes teams within the middle and high school scope! This is so that we may expand in welcoming up and coming debaters and communicators into our division!**

**Workshop Proposals:** Submissions for Workshops should be submitted as Panel submissions in the XCD platform. Workshop submissions must include 1) a workshop title, 2) an overall workshop rationale (no more than 200 words) and 3) the following information about EACH facilitator of the workshop: their name(s), institutional affiliation(s) and contact information. All of this should be compiled in a single document and submitted in the “paper upload option” on the XCD platform.

The division welcomes workshop proposals addressing the convention theme and what it is to be anchored/. What may be anchoring argumentation. Submissions are not required to address these matters.

**Competitive Paper Submissions:** All paper submissions must be electronically submitted to the SSCA convention site at <https://www.xcdsystem.com/ssca/member>. For the paper to be assigned for review, please follow all the instructions on the convention site. For anonymous review, please omit all author-identifying information from the manuscript. All papers submitted will be considered for the Division's Top Paper Award. For student papers, indicate "STUDENT" on the first page of the manuscript, and indicate "Student Paper" during the submission process. The Division's Top Student Paper will be submitted for consideration for the SSCA Bostrom Young Scholar Award.

**Panel or Roundtable Submissions:** Panels and roundtables are submitted through the same process as competitive papers; just be sure to select the appropriate submission type when prompted. The submitter will be able to add other panelists as "authors" after the initial submission. Upload a copy of the panel, listing the description/rationale, panelists, and, if appropriate, panelists' individual topics; upload this at the "Upload Paper" prompt.

**Deadlines:** Submissions must be submitted online no later than 11:59 p.m. PST on **Sunday, September 15, 2025**. Go to the submission site by going to the conference website (<https://www.xcdsystem.com/ssca/member>) and clicking the submission link. First time visitors to the site will need to create an account. Return visitors will need to use the same email address they used to establish the account. To avoid technical problems, early submission is strongly advised. Any submission not meeting the above requirements will not be accepted for review. If you have additional questions, please contact the Division Vice-Chair and Planner Brian Lain ([brian.lain@unt.edu](mailto:brian.lain@unt.edu)).

*Anonymous Review:* All papers submitted should follow standard procedures for removing any information that identifies the author and/or the institution within the paper and within any document metadata. Divisions reserve the right to reject papers not following these standards.

*Audio-Visual Support:* To maintain affordable conference rates, audio-visual support is extremely limited. It must be requested only if needed with supporting rationale and should be part of the submission to the division planner. Requests will be considered and are not guaranteed.

*Panel Proposals:* Best practices, in the interest of divisions, is to submit a proposal with a diverse panel, comprised of individuals representing different institutions, and where possible and relevant, potential new members.

*Submission Protocol:* Submissions to SSCA must be **original** research that has not been published or presented at another regional, national, or international conference. Also, the same paper or panel should not be submitted to more than one division.

*Student Papers:* For a submission to be considered a student paper and to be eligible for student awards or recognition, the author or authors of the paper must all be students at the time the papers is submitted. A paper co-authored by a student and a faculty member, for instance, will not be classified as a student paper.