

SSCA 2026-2030 Strategic Plan

Background

The SSCA Constitution states that the officers shall meet for the purpose of strategic planning and that no more than five years shall elapse between such meetings. Prior to the work on this strategic plan, the last strategic planning meetings were held in 2016, 2021, and 2022.

Current Planning Process

The 2024-2025 Administrative Committee, under the leadership of President Carl Cates, started the process of planning. At the 2025 Norfolk convention, a session was held to discuss the strategic plan and receive input from the SSCA membership. The 2025-2026 Administrative Committee, under the leadership of President Pat Wheaton, processed the members' input, studied previous strategic plans, developed ideas relevant to the organization today, and developed and finalized the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan.

The SSCA officers involved in this two-year process included:

Frances Brandau, Sam Houston State
University
Ann Burnette, Texas State University
Carl Cates, University of Texas-Permian
Basin
Xiaoti Fan, University of Alabama in
Huntsville
Rebecca Fox, Texas State University
John Haas, University of Tennessee-
Knoxville
Jerry Hale, University of Tennessee-
Chattanooga
Heather Hayes, University of Alabama
Kimberly Johnson, Tennessee State
University

Mary Meares, University of Alabama
Laurie Metcalf, Blinn College
Leslie Pace, Southeast Missouri State
University
Narissra Punyanunt-Carter, Texas Tech
University
Leland Spencer, University of South
Carolina
Antonio Spikes, Georgia Southern
University
Ryan Tabrizi, Syracuse University
Nakia Welch, San Jacinto College
Pat Wheaton, Georgia Southern
University

Accountability for this plan includes:

- Reporting strategic plan accomplishments at the mid-year Executive Council business meeting and the annual convention business meetings
- Scheduling a session on strategic planning at the annual conference.

1. Planning for an Engaged Community

SSCA's officers and members have repeatedly expressed their commitment to making SSCA a welcoming and inclusive organization. To accomplish this strategic goal, we will:

- Recruit in different areas to expand membership, including recruiting at HBCUs, community colleges, and institutions located near the site of the annual conference.
- Develop resources for SSCA leadership, sharing such resources through convention sessions and a web page section
- Develop engagement plans to engage communities outside of the membership, including but not limited to K-12 teachers and forensic educators
- Develop conference sessions with scholars to discuss engagement, inclusion, and leadership
- Enhance relationships with state associations, including offering speaker resources for state associations (focusing on past presidents)
- Plan a conference session for the Undergraduate Honors Conference on selecting and applying to graduate programs, perhaps in conjunction with the UHC Breakfast
- Plan conference sessions spotlighting previously selected awardees of SSCA teaching and scholarship awards, such as recipients of Sisco teaching Award, Freshley New Teacher Award, Osborn Teacher-Scholar Award, Osborn Community College Educator Award, Rushing Early Career Research Award, and Hendrix Instructional Development Award

2. Continue Improving Communication

Although SSCA has made improvements in our communication channels (web site, emails, podcasts, newsletters) in recent years, we recognize that there is additional, important work to do to communicate with our members more effectively and more consistently. To improve these channels of communication (because, after all, we are communication scholars), we will:

- Assess and budget for a new website that may include our convention planning functions
- Improve and expand our communication, including the use of social media to communicate, with members and other external stakeholders
- Plan conference informational and listening sessions pertaining to SSCA business and other association-related matters beyond the formal discussions of the AC, EC, and the annual business meeting
- Send quarterly emails to include
 - Updates on association matters and progress on strategic initiatives
 - Updates on conference planning

- Reports from committees, divisions, and interest groups
- Spotlights on member accomplishments, including awards and other honors both within and outside the association
- Develop Crisis Communication plans

3. Increase Revenue for the Association

Although SSCA is currently financially strong, we know that it is imperative that the leadership continue to bring in revenues, keep membership and conference rates reasonable, and reduce the deficit spending on the convention each year. With rising food and beverage minimums for future convention locations, future conventions will increasingly spend more than they generate in revenue. We will

- Explore more options for revenue streams more broadly, including options that provide revenue throughout the year, rather than just at the time of the conference, such as web advertisements and other member services
- Transition away from the costly production of the printed program without sacrificing the income that program advertisements bring.
- Fundraise for named awards and for conference receptions so that less funding is required in the SSCA annual budget
- Continue to reassess the role and duties of the Strategic Communication Director
- Investigate the legal option for establishing a foundation/endowment to financially support SSCA
- Consider changes in membership categories, dues, and conference fees

4. Study the Future of our Conference

With changes in communication technology affecting the way we communicate, and in light of the instability of institutional support for faculty travel, we will

- Survey members to better understand their needs and desires pertaining to the annual conference
- Explore the practical and financial implications of offering online or hybrid options for participation in the annual conference, including
 - the effect of online or hybrid options on room block and food & beverage requirements in contracts with host sites
 - the audiovisual requirements for supporting online or hybrid options, including availability of such equipment and costs
 - the possibility of day rates for members, particularly graduate students, who may not be able to attend or afford to attend a multi-day conference
- Survey members post-conference to gather conference feedback to improve future conference planning and delivery
- Review the current conference planning and development process, including
 - Site selection and planning timeline

- Review of online platforms for submission, review, and programming
- Planner and reviewer training, particularly in the use of the online platform
- Development of alternative session options including poster sessions, scholar-to-scholar sessions, and research-in-progress roundtables
- Revision of review forms to be more applicable to submission types (competitive papers, panels and roundtables, posters, research-in-progress)

5. Prepare for the 100th Anniversary of the Association

SSCA was founded in 1930 and held its first conference that year in Birmingham, Alabama. Our 100th conference location has yet to be determined but will occur in the Spring of 2030. To commemorate and celebrate our centennial, we will

- Solicit members to serve on an ad-hoc Centennial Commemoration Committee, to be established by the Executive Council per the provisions of the SSCA Constitution for ad hoc committees serving more than one year
- Gather information and oral histories to create a “History of SSCA”
- Develop special programming for the 2030 conference to commemorate the Association’s centennial