

Statement from Organizational Communication Division Leadership on Top Paper Panel

Nov, 29, 2019

As the elected leadership of the organizational communication division, we regret the events that occurred during the division's top paper panel at the NCA Conference in Baltimore. By accepting elected positions in our division, we have responsibilities to address this occurrence and even more so to listen and facilitate the diverse interests, voices, and work of our members. We are listening and learning, and we are committed to doing more and doing better.

Authors in the top paper panel presented an argument about how our field has been silencing and marginalizing critiques of the field, and the formal response inadvertently demonstrated that very argument and then refocused attention away from the argument in a way that was inappropriate. There are important questions to be asked of and critiques to be offered to the top papers. But the official response that followed the papers did not focus us on such questions and meant that we lost the chance to engage in the moment and learn together.

We regret that the respondent's comments took the focus away from the top papers and cut off the opportunity for collective discussion of the papers, their presentations, and the response. We also regret the hurt experienced by many members who were present in the room and by additional persons who are processing the response. The respondent has shared an apology for her presentation. In addition, she has more recently offered her resignation from her role and the duties of past chair, indicating that she recognizes that the harm of her response is not erased by an apology. Her resignation was offered in the spirit of desiring to make sure we can all focus on the systemic and procedural changes that need to happen. We respect, accept, and appreciate her decision.

The top paper panel highlights problems within the division related to identity and intersectionality that cannot and will not be ignored. We recognize we are embedded in long-held normative practices that can create silences. We also acknowledge that coming to terms with those practices and structures can create new silences. It is important that we engage with these tensions among our membership. As a division, we want to pride ourselves on welcoming and investigating a wide range of viewpoints, and we should enact intellectual openness and curiosity expressed in anti-racist, respectful, and inclusive ways. When we fail to do those things we promote marginalization, reinforce coloniality, and center whiteness.

Our hope as a division is that we can build structures that facilitate better learning and openness to and discussion among our diverse membership. Thus, we are using this moment to focus on how we can do better in the future.

Following NCA 2019, and building on steps taken by division leadership earlier in 2019 in response to the Distinguished Scholars controversy, the division leadership is currently working on the following initial actions:

- The establishment of both an awards committee and a diversity and inclusion committee to better address issues of diversity and inclusion in the division through our awards, programming, research, teaching, and service.
- The moving of officer elections to an official NCA-run online system, starting next year. This change should increase the representation of our 600+ person division beyond the 100-200 who attend our business meetings.

We desire and support additional structural changes. Our summer survey had already revealed several groups of scholars who feel marginalized in our division, and the top paper panel has raised additional concerns. The issues we face are immensely complicated, requiring focused attention and reflection, and we are committed to engaging in that difficult work. We will work closely with our new diversity and inclusion committee to develop new structures and processes. Please be on the lookout for invitations from the division's leadership and the diversity and inclusion committee for opportunities to participate in these conversations.

In closing, we are committed to structural changes that help to create a more welcoming and diverse environment for all scholars of organizational communication. This commitment includes participating in difficult conversations, disrupting symbolic violence, and challenging conditions of erasures, which obscure and omit the contributions of a variety of scholarship and scholars that are outside the division's status quo. We have a lot of work to do. Please join us as we seek to move forward together.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Meisenbach, Chair

With consultation and editing assistance from the other elected officers:
Matthew Weber, Vice Chair
Mahuya Pal, Vice Chair Elect
Angela Gist-Mackey, Awards Chair
Jeffrey Treem, Past Secretary