

## **Organizational Communication Division's Statement on Diversity, Inclusion and Justice**

The Organizational Communication Division of the National Communication Association (the Division hereafter) commits to rebuilding and reimagining the Division to advocate values of diversity, inclusion, and justice. We do so in acknowledgment that our Division has in the past and often still fails to enact these values in our actions, structures, and assumptions. Our failures have harmed our members. We must strive to be anti-racist, decenter whiteness, dismantle systematic racism, marginalization, and oppression, and eradicate discriminatory and abusive practices that have been entrenched in the Division and the field of Communication. To pursue these missions, the Executive Committee and the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion have closely collaborated on a number of action-oriented projects.

As organizational communication scholars, we acknowledge that organizations constitute and are constituted by our communication on micro, meso, and macro levels. Dominant values and norms—such as, racism, sexism, heteronormativity, ableism, classism, ageism, and Americentrism—are thus inscribed into both our organizing structures and quotidian communication practices. A number of scholars have shared their poignant testimonies about unjust practices prevalent in the Discipline, including a disproportionate amount of service and emotional labor among BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) scholars, citation and review practices that reproduce whiteness, microaggressions, and body policing at conferences, just to name a few. A history of systemic oppression is loudly present even in our silences. It is visible in our exhaustion, defensiveness, resistance, and hopefulness.

The Division fully commits to enacting structural changes, pursuing our mission to promote diversity, inclusion, and justice, and advocating anti-racism and decolonial thought. We adhere to the notion, which Brenda J. Allen presented at a Division-sponsored NCA pre-conference in 2017, that such changes should be strategic, systemic, and sustainable. As we understand that sustainable changes can only be enabled by long-term endeavoring, we have (a) begun to examine our existing structures and practices carefully, (b) initiated several tangible actions that can be implemented this year, and (c) explored new ideas and procedures that can be further developed in the coming years.

In what follows, we provide details about the changes that we have made and planned thus far. Organizational change is a work-in-progress, which must be constantly reviewed and developed through our ongoing efforts. We are hopeful that, with support from Division members, we can continuously navigate these challenges together and create a more inclusive and just space for all members.

### **1. We will diversify the Division's leadership and propose an amendment of bylaws to enact and sustain structural changes.**

We have revisited the current bylaws and constitution of leadership to investigate how the existing system has reproduced hierarchical structures that favor privileged groups and exclude marginalized ones. As we believe that tangible and structural changes are critical for fighting against systemic discrimination and oppression, we plan the following:

Based on our initial analysis of the bylaws, we will propose one or more amendments for our membership to consider and vote on that could change the make-up of Division leadership.

Specifically, we plan to propose (a) adding new officer roles that can better represent the diversity of our membership such as student representatives, early career representatives, and officers from adjunct faculty or teaching-focused institutions, (b) transforming the new ad hoc Committee on Diversity and Inclusion into a standing committee, and (c) adding a member of the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion to the Nomination Committee. While pursuing these goals, we will thoroughly review the bylaws to make necessary changes, including the current rules on ad-hoc committees.

Second, we will continue to analyze the Division bylaws to identify additional wordings or stipulations that (a) reflect systemic biases or (b) require amendments to represent the values of diversity, inclusion, and justice. For example, based on our initial review, the bylaws have an emphasis on research with less recognition of teaching and practice.

Finally, we acknowledge that, as we diversify our leadership, all members of the Division leadership should be mindful about our communication and work climate to cultivate safety and fairness. All members of committees and working groups should have voice and influence, rather than serving as token diversity. We will carefully examine the distribution of our labor and workloads to prevent unfair work assignment to certain members (such as BIPOC) in terms of both the amount and nature of their work.

## **2. We will explore and implement new programming ideas to foster more inclusive and just conference experiences for all members.**

The annual NCA conventions serve as a central site for access, interactions, and networking. Therefore, we have discussed various ways to improve Division members' conference experiences. Although some of our initial plans will need to be further revised due to the current challenges and uncertainties associated with a hybrid format, we believe that our plans can be implemented in the near future. Further, we will continue to invest our effort into creating a more inclusive climate throughout the convention.

First, we will host three new sessions at the 2020 NCA conference that adopt new-to-our-Division formats and structures. We have programmed a Research Escalator session, in which scholars have opportunities to receive mentoring from other experienced scholars who share similar interests as theirs. The Research Escalator session will offer a space for (a) small group discussions to promote open conversations among scholars from diverse perspectives, institutions, and backgrounds, and (b) dedicated mentoring on research, writing, and publishing. In addition, we will host the inaugural Division Town Hall this year, led by the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion joined by the Executive Committee. The Town Hall is intended to provide an open space for discussing the Division's plans and activities, garnering suggestions and feedback, and collectively envisioning the future of the Division. Finally, we added a convention session dedicated to showcasing the work of the top four student paper authors from the competitive paper review process. This session provides a new way to highlight student work apart from naming our top student papers at the business meeting,

Second, Division Vice-Chair Dr. Mahuya Pal and Committee on Diversity and Inclusion Chair, Dr. Heewon Kim are organizing the Division's pre-conference, titled "Decolonizing and unconferencing: Social justice in organizational communication." This pre-conference focuses specifically on the topics of decolonization, inclusion, and justice, and we aim for it to create an open forum to exchange radical thoughts on research, pedagogy, and praxis among our Division

members. We are exploring various options to promote further engagement as we have elected to host our pre-conference virtually.

Third, we will strive to reduce the barriers to attendance, participation, and socializing, especially considering the experiences of members from less-research-oriented institutions and marginalized groups. We have discussed a range of ideas such as (a) informal meet-ups or coffee chats, (b) mentoring sessions for international students, early career scholars, and BIPOC scholars, (c) sessions on teaching and pedagogy, (d) diversifying submission types, (e) creating a conference guideline that challenges the dominant norms of professionalism, and (f) an opportunity for a clothing drive/swap at NCA, inspired by the Western States Communication Association. Although we will not be able to implement many of these ideas this year, because of the nature of a hybrid conference, we will make sure to pursue these ideas in the coming years.

Finally, we fully intend to create additional future opportunities for participation, interaction, and inclusion. Although we are still experimenting with what our conference will look like in Fall 2020, we anticipate that a hybrid format and virtual attendance will offer increased access options to Division members that may be replicable in the coming years. We will also share our takeaways from this year's hybrid conferencing with the next programming committee to develop new options for participation in future conferences.

### **3. We will invest our time, funds, and other resources in transforming the Division's structure, culture, and activities.**

We understand that instrumental support and tangible changes are crucial for transforming the Division's structure and culture. To sustain this long-term endeavor, we will continue to engage in various activities to unlearn dominant and Western ways of thinking and reorient ourselves for inclusion and justice. Furthermore, we propose to launch a new initiative to create sustainable funds and resources for structural change.

First, all members of the Executive Committee and the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion have completed the Intercultural Development Inventory Assessment (<https://idiinventory.com/>), which involves individual assessment, a group debrief session, and personal development planning. Additionally, all members have participated in a range of learning activities individually during the past few months, such as anti-racist training, online webinars, and reading work on whiteness and heteronormativity. We invite all Division members to engage in similar training opportunities and seek to develop cultural norms where the Division leadership continuously and openly engages in such practices.

Second, we plan to launch a new initiative to raise funds to advance the Division's diversity and inclusion efforts. We are currently exploring ways to raise funds including member donations and institutional sponsorship (e.g., departments, journals, publishers). Contingent on the amount of raised funds, we propose to allocate new funds to areas such as supporting students and BIPOC scholars (e.g., conference travel support), member training and mentoring, creative programming, and providing cash awards for new award categories being proposed by the Division's ad hoc awards committee (i.e., awards for teaching at various levels and a mentoring award).

### **4. We will explore various methods to gather input from marginalized scholars in ways that minimize potential risks of disclosure, discrimination, and retribution.**

Last year, we conducted an initial anonymous online survey to investigate members' perceptions and evaluations of the Division's climate. We recognize the need to continue to develop various processes by which Division members can provide feedback and insight. We also share the concerns that quantitative data do not capture diverse opinions and experiences that cannot be measured by pre-set categories. Hence, we propose the following steps to develop a mindful, culturally-appropriate way to glean additional input moving forward.

First, we will analyze the qualitative data (i.e., responses to open-ended questions) collected in the previous year's survey and present our findings in the Division's Town Hall Meeting at NCA. In doing so, we aim to (a) report in more depth on what has already been shared by our Division members through the survey and (b) solicit Division members' insight into the findings and ideas. As the Town Hall will serve as an interactive space for open exchanges, we hope to discuss novel and effective ways to reach out to diverse groups and listen to their stories.

Second, we plan to conduct another study in the upcoming year, building upon the ideas collected in the Town Hall. As we are currently exploring different alternatives, we would appreciate Division members' participation in the Town Hall to share their thoughts on designing the next study. Division members are also always welcome to contact the Executive Committee and the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion to share their opinions and concerns. We fully intend to better grasp the Division members' lived experiences through our confidential (and/or anonymous) studies to continue to foster positive changes.

## **Conclusion**

As a final remark, we once again stress that the Division must commit to sustained efforts toward material and cultural changes to promote diversity, inclusion, and justice. The core changes described above reflect some of our attempts to foster less hierarchical and more inclusive models of organizing. Other changes undertaken within the Division this year also include (a) the formation of the ad hoc Committee on Diversity and Inclusion and its subsequent call for new members, which has facilitated less hierarchical collaboration and ideation, (b) a new recruitment process adopted by the Award Committee Chair to increase representation of different racial/ethnic groups, sexualities, abilities, and institutional affiliations in the awards process, and (c) close interactions and collaboration between the Division's Executive Committee and the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion.

We also call for proactive actions and open conversations among Division members to support and guide our ongoing efforts for structural change. We ask that each of us reflect on our previous actions and experiences with respect to our missions for diversity, inclusion, and justice. We hope that all Division members care, support, and respect one another when they interact and relate with others. The Executive Committee and the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion will continue to devote ourselves to envisioning, creating, and maintaining a more inclusive and just community for all Division members.